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The influence of scepticism
on character

THE INFLUENCE OF SCEPTICISM ON CHARACTER.



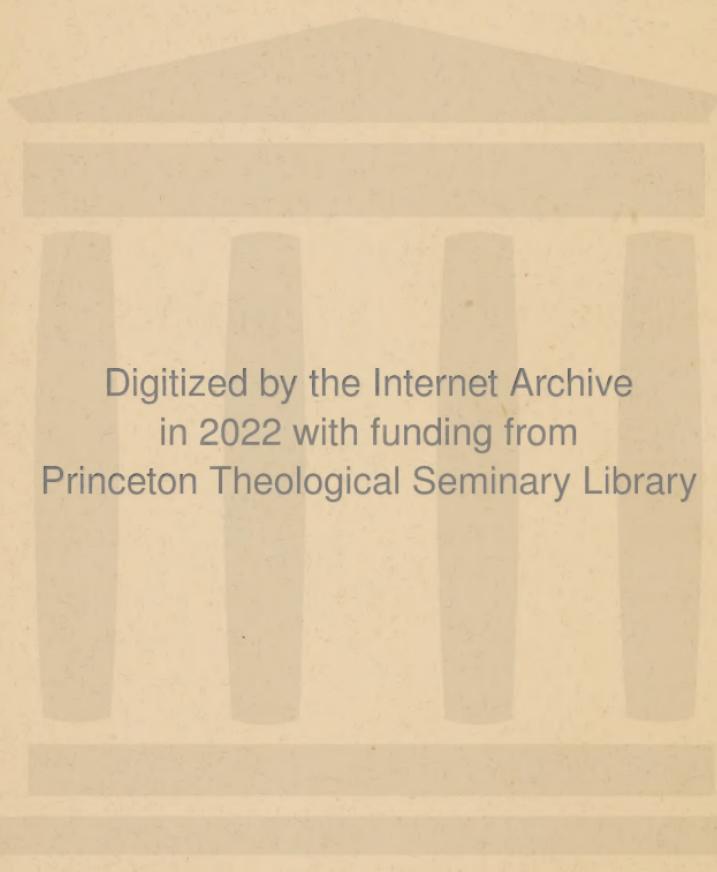
BEING THE
SIXTEENTH FERNLEY LECTURE;
DELIVERED AT
CITY ROAD CHAPEL, LONDON,
AUGUST 2, 1886.

BY THE
REV. WILLIAM L. WATKINSON.

NINTH THOUSAND.

London:
CHARLES H. KELLY,
2, CASTLE ST., CITY RD.; AND 26, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1898.

TO THE
REV. HENRY L. CHURCH
UPPER NORWOOD,
WITH MUCH RESPECT.



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THE INFLUENCE OF SCEPTICISM ON CHARACTER.

No apology is required for assuming that human character is affected by belief. That constitutional characteristics to a certain extent determine a man's ideal and philosophy is true, but it is also true that a man's ideal and philosophy powerfully affect his character and manner of life. Some of our beliefs—poetical, mythological, speculative—little influence us in matters of conduct, but here we have to do with fancy rather than with faith; whatever a man *really* believes, whatever theory of the world he finds himself constrained to accept, whatever interpretation he gives to human life, whatever type of character secures his sanction and admiration, whatever may be his ultimate hope or fear, inevitably fashions his character and colours his action day by day and hour by hour. What we believe with our whole heart is of the highest consequence to us, and to teach the contrary is to divest thought and conviction of reality and serious significance, is indeed to avow the utter irrationality of life. Organization conditions physical life, yet that life precedes the organization and fashions it; so our ideals and beliefs may be modified by temperament and circumstance, yet imagination and conscience come first, and constitute the cardinal factors in human character.

2 *The Influence of Scepticism on Character.*

We infer, therefore, the character of modern society is largely affected by Christian faith. All reasonable people will acknowledge that the faith of Christian believers is to a considerable extent most real ; nay, in tens of thousands of cases it is the most real thing in their life. The personal eternal God, loving righteousness, is a reality ; the Lord Jesus Christ, with His incomparable moral beauty and love, is a reality ; the atoning death of Calvary, full of infinite comfort, is a reality ; the eternal world, with its conscious multitudes in sublime joy or in the woe of eternal sin, is a reality ; these doctrines and the related evangelical articles are not held as mythologies, but as fundamental verities of life and destiny. Of all the creeds men hold — political, industrial, educational — in none do they believe more profoundly and passionately than in their religious creed, and by no creed are they more powerfully or more constantly affected. Mr. Froude says Carlyle saw ‘that religion as it existed in England had ceased to operate at all over the conduct of men in their ordinary business, it was a hollow appearance, a word without force in it.’ There is no telling what a man can see when he shuts his eyes ; but it is plain to every impartial onlooker that the evangelic faith works in English society like one of the great laws of nature—silently, pervasively, unceasingly, mightily.

Does it work for good or evil ? What would be the effect on English character if this faith were to be rejected, its ideals, hopes, inspirations, and circumscriptions alike discredited and put aside ? What would be the moral consequence of the substitution of nature for God, of philosophy for revelation, of science for faith, of the

adoption of a purely secular system of life in place of that Christian system which obtains at present with its supernatural universe and its future personal existence ?

Miss Martineau foresees only advantage from this triumph of secularism. ‘With the last of the mythologies will pass away, after some lingering, the immoralities which have attended all mythologies. Now, while the state of our race is such as to need all our mutual devotedness, all our aspiration, all our resources of courage, hope, faith, and good cheer, the disciples of the Christian creed and morality are called upon, day by day, to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling,” and so forth. Such exhortations are too low for even the wavering mood and quacked morality of a time of theological suspense and uncertainty. In the extinction of that suspense, and the discrediting of that selfish quackery, I see the prospect, for future generations, of a purer and loftier virtue, and a truer and sweeter heroism than divines who preach such self-seeking can conceive of.’¹ Thus the Deborah of the secular host sounds her timbrel. Mr. Justice Stephen, however, cherishes far more sober expectations touching the secular *régime*, for, whilst he believes things on the whole would continue much as they are at present, he thinks some loss to virtue inevitable by the extinction of Christian faith. He says: ‘Love, friendship, good-nature, kindness, carried to the height of sincere and devoted affection, will always be the chief pleasures of life whether Christianity is true or false ; but Christian charity is not the same as any of these or all of these put together, and I think that if Christian theology were exploded, Christian charity would

¹ *Autobiography*, vol. ii., p. 461.

not survive it.¹ A simply secularistic state of things might be expected to produce ‘a solid, vigorous, useful kind of moral standard;’ but morality would suffer on its mystical side, and that unearthly flower known as Christian charity would cease to bloom. Thus whilst Miss Martineau anticipates that through the repudiation of religion virtue would be touched to finer issues, the cooler lawyer, equally thoroughgoing in his scepticism, foresees that if revelation be discredited, if our sun go down whilst it is yet day, although the root crops may still thrive, we must be prepared to miss certain ethical orchids which have hitherto been the crowning glory of our civilization, and whose strange splendour speaks to us of other worlds.

The candid admission of Mr. Justice Stephen that virtue in its rarer forms must suffer by the decline of faith is very significant, coming from such a quarter; but we do not believe it goes nearly far enough. We believe not only that some exquisite forms of virtue would perish, but the bloom would be brushed from all the fruits of light, those fruits would be scarcer and cruder, and roots of bitterness checked to-day would spring forth on every side with disastrous luxuriance. Our contention is, that the denial of the great truths of the evangelic faith can exert only a baneful influence on character, and that morals in all spheres and manifestations must suffer deeply by the prevalence of such scepticism; whatever may be the loss to art, or poetry, or literature, by the negation of religion, that is by the negation of the highest and purest idealism, character would suffer soonest, and suffer most severely.

And no loss is more to be deprecated than loss of

¹ *The Nineteenth Century*, June, 1884.

character ; we may find compensation for all other misfortunes, but failure in moral strength and delicacy is irreparable. We feel this in regard to the individual. Introduced to one with a great name, a splendid history, brilliant gifts, we feel at once the sense of reverence, and instinctively do homage to greatness ; but let it be whispered that there is falsity or foulness in the life of our hero, and he forthwith suffers in our eyes a swift and terrible degradation—his greatness is dwarfed, his authority impaired, his eloquence becomes a trick, his purple seems literally threadbare and unclean. And we are conscious of a similar revulsion of feeling in the presence of a rich and intellectual nation signally deficient in righteousness ; so soon as we discover moral corruption beneath its material splendour, we shrink as from a leper whose gorgeous garments only heighten the horror of the plague. We have writers who would fain persuade us that our instinct in this matter is somewhat at fault, that our estimate of virtue is exaggerated, partaking of the nature of a superstition, that our Puritan education has taught us to attach a fictitious value to obedience and righteousness, and that we need to revise and liberalize our moral judgments. But the Christian world persists in its belief in the unparalleled importance and grandeur of moral character ; and the atheistic evolutionist who maintains that man is the highest link in the chain of zoological development, and that his moral feelings are the latest and highest development of that highest link, substantially agrees with the Christian world in assigning to moral character an altogether indisputable supremacy. The conviction of the community at large to-day is, that

virtue is peerless, that practical righteousness is of transcendent and overwhelming importance, and that any material or intellectual loss is light compared with the catastrophe of sinking the moral standard, of injuring the moral sense. We are persuaded the worst thing that could happen to us and to our children would be any loss of reverence for conscience, character, conduct.

But is it a fact that character would suffer by the prevalence of scepticism? Have we anything like sound and sufficient reasons to justify our anxiety about the future of morality? Some say religion, in seeking to limit human passion, is building a wall round the sea, whilst the rocks and sands would restrain the waves without any artificial securities whatever; whilst others believe our moral welfare is bound up with our religious faith, and that any injury to this faith would be like tampering with the banks and dykes of Holland, letting in on fruitful landscapes the devouring sea. We will give our reasons for adhering to the latter view.

I.

WE consult the light of HISTORY. Mr. Leslie Stephen assures us that whatever is the fate of theology, religion is safe. ‘The world would survive even if Anglicanism were a thing of the past, and would probably find itself much better off than clergymen expect. Whatever happens, the religious instincts of mankind will survive, and will find some mode of expression.’¹ Mr. Leslie Stephen is equally cheerful and confident respecting the future of morality whatever may become of faith. In his opinion, the principle of reverence, goodness, truth, and justice, is natural and spontaneous, and cannot be destroyed. ‘We inevitably accept the conclusion that the virtuous instincts are the foundation, not the outgrowth, of religious belief, and may therefore be expected to survive its destruction or transformation.’² Men who write thus forget that we live in the ends of the world, that the experiment of a nation living practically a purely secular life has been tried more than once, and the result of such experiments is clearly discoverable on the pages of history. It is, of course, very cheering to listen to Mr. Leslie Stephen prophesying so blandly, but the records of the past show clearly enough that whilst the religious, ethical, and artistic instincts of the race persist, yet these instincts are susceptible of perversion and degradation, and alike in individuals, nations

¹ *Essays*, p. 7.

² *Essays*, p. 107.

and ages are found in such perversion and degradation, accompanied by many sorrows.

A year or two ago Mr. Justice Stephen wrote a very remarkable article, in which he also, along with the most outspoken atheism, sought to assure us regarding the future of morality. ‘There are many who think, or say they think, that if the scientific view of human life is true, life itself would not be worth having. This seems to me altogether false. We should have to live on different principles from those which have usually been professed ; but I think that for people who took a just view of their own position, and were moderately fortunate, life would still be extremely pleasant. The world seems to me a very good world, if it would only last. It is full of pleasant people and curious things, and I think that most men find no great difficulty in turning their minds away from its transient character. Love, friendship, ambition, science, literature, art, politics, commerce, trades, and a thousand other matters will go on equally well, as far as I can see, whether there is or is not a God or a future state, and a man who cannot occupy every waking moment of a long life with some or other of these things must be either very unfortunate in regard of his health or circumstances, or else must be a poor creature. . . . No doubt the great leading doctrines of theology are noble and glorious. . . . If, however, these views have to be given up, I do not see either that life will become worthless, or that morals in particular will cease to be. I think that religion would die with theology ; but, as I have said, I think we could live very well without religion, though on principles different from those which most men have hitherto professed, though for the most part identical with

those on which respectable people have usually acted. Morality would be transformed, but by no means destroyed. . . . Men can never associate together without honouring and rewarding and protecting in various ways temperance, fortitude, benevolence, and justice. No individual man can live in any society of any size without observing the fact, sharing more or less in the common feelings, judging his own conduct according to them, and perceiving that his own personal interest is, to an extent more or less considerable, bound up in the general interest. That this state of things will hereafter produce, as it has in the past produced, a solid, vigorous, useful kind of moral standard, reflected to a great, perhaps to an increasing degree in law properly so called, seems practically certain.¹

'As it has in the past produced.' The appeal is to history, so to history let us go. It was with very mingled feelings that I pondered this passage sauntering the other day in the silent streets of Pompeii. The old Pompeians were exactly the sort of people of which Mr. Justice Stephen approves. They regarded this as 'a very good world'; their painted city on the shores of the blue Mediterranean was 'full of pleasant people and curious things'; with much ingenuity they made life 'extremely pleasant'; they turned away their attention, very successfully, from 'the transient character of life'; they led 'an easy life,' troubling themselves the very least about any form of self-denial; they had crucified Christ a few years before, but that troubled them as little as Justice Stephen wishes it to trouble us; theatres, festivals, processions, music, fashion, perfumes, baths, flowers, illuminated, sweetened, en-

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1884.

livened the passing hours ; ‘ love, friendship, ambition, science, literature, art, politics, commerce, trade, and a thousand other matters ’ went on untroubled by a thought of God above or a life beyond. In France is a school of painters known as Impressionists ; ignoring the more settled aspects of nature, these artists eagerly catch the sudden, ethereal, vanishing phases of the world’s beauty and splendour. The Impressionist may be a new figure in painting, but otherwise is as old as the world. Adam and Eve were the first students in this school ; looking upon the forbidden fruit they saw ‘ that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise,’ and, ignoring all profounder considerations, the eternal will, the eternal consequence, they put forth their hand and ate, and suffered. The inhabitants of Pompeii were Impressionists of the most skilful order. They declined such metaphysical themes as Deity, and devoted themselves to the world of sensation and emotion ; calling away their attention from an uncertain future, dismissing faith and hope, they concentrated themselves with an entire absorption on what was *here* and *now* ; the deeper meaning of life, if life has any deeper meaning, was neglected for the aspects of things ; they thirsted for existence in exquisite places and in exquisite things ; wine and love, flowers and music, art and oratory, letters and song, whatever gratified the imagination and senses was ardently cultivated ; they aimed to make existence from day to day a well-executed piece of music ; dark things were thrust out of sight, their marble sarcophagi being covered with Bacchanalian imagery ; and that they might prosecute to the full the

love of beauty and pleasure, they claimed an entire personal liberty of heart and mind, liberty above all from popular vulgar morality.¹ This Epicurean creed, so extensively acted upon in the days of the Empire, is precisely the creed of Mr. Justice Stephen, and the one he would again see adopted by modern society without misgiving.

But it is time to ask, What was the moral condition of the people who thus ignored the profounder ideas of existence, and gave themselves up to the pursuit of profit and pleasure? The fact is indisputable that character suffered grievously, society was full of terrible immoralities, and it is almost impossible for us to conceive how such scenes of brutality and obscenity existed in the face of the sun. ‘Morality would be transformed, but by no means destroyed. . . . Men can never associate together without honouring and rewarding and protecting in various ways temperance, fortitude, benevolence, and justice. . . . This state of things will hereafter produce, as it has in the past produced, a solid, vigorous, useful kind of moral standard.’ Pompeii contradicts every glozing word of it. That once gay but infamous city, a fair specimen of the cities of the period, was full of drunkenness, cruelty, injustice, and uncleanness, until the day God overthrew it as He did Sodom and Gomorrah; and, uncovered after the lapse of eighteen centuries, the grim city looks like a colossal spectre rising at the bidding of God from its black grave to warn modern nations against an atheistic Epicurean philosophy, lest they too should be despoiled of their glory, and sink into rottenness and ruin.

It is argued, however, that if we accept the programme

¹ See *Marius the Epicurean*.

of Mr. Justice Stephen, and devote ourselves to materialism and rational pleasure, we need apprehend no outburst of immorality, the state of the world being altogether different to what it was eighteen centuries ago, modern society possessing so many elements of salvation which were wanting to classical civilization. Men are never so ingenious as when they undertake to defraud themselves of the precious lessons of history, and at the present moment much sophistry is being employed to blind us to the clear, solemn teaching of history respecting the inability of natural society to sustain a high civilization. That there is now no fear of any rapid or serious deterioration in the morals of society is an inference drawn, it seems, from two main considerations: first, that the force of evil is diminished; and second, that science has given fresh guarantees for moral conduct; two considerations entirely unfounded.

Within the historic period the number of volcanoes has considerably decreased, and the existing volcanoes generally exhibit much less activity than formerly, the inference being that the central deeps are less fiery and fulminating; so our optimistic writers assume a somewhat similar process has been going on in mankind itself, and that the terrible passions which characterised the old civilizations, and which destroyed them, have spent much of their force and fury. Now this assumption, so constantly made by us, that human nature is less fierce and unmanageable than in primitive times, is not altogether groundless, but it may easily lead to very false conclusions. In Christendom human nature stands before us tamed and exalted by a powerful and sublime discipline extended

through many centuries, but it must not be forgotten that human nature is potentially what it always was, that it is still capable of awful lust, pride, wrath, and that we have everything to fear from the suspension of the ameliorative discipline. Many extreme types of vice seem now a long way from us, and their recurrence in the modern world on any considerable scale appears simply impossible, but we may easily over-estimate our immunity. The abominable love of the Sodomite, the bitter despotisms of Orientalism, the voluptuousness of the Sybarite, the sickening cruelty of the Amphitheatre, the diabolism of the Renaissance, the red wrath of the Reign of Terror, these are all potentially with us to-day, and we need only a certain change in the atmosphere, such a change as the extinction of religious faith could not fail to produce, to behold on every side the up-springing of the ghastliest vices which have ever dishonoured our nature, the unfolding of the most tragic scenes which shock us on the pages of history.

In Southern Italy spreads a landscape of extraordinary loveliness. Roman poets and orators celebrated its groves and gardens, its sky of sunshine, its blue bays, its nightingales and roses, and gazing upon the same scene to-day you feel the landscape is not indebted for its fame to the poets, but the poets found their inspiration in the landscape; it is a favoured spot where none may witness unmoved the lasting bridal of earth and sky. And yet the whole region is volcanic, the garden of glory being literally a paradise within the crater of a volcano. You strike the rocky earth and it rings hollow, close by the calm lake is a boiling spring, pluck a flower out of a mass of aromatic foliage and your hand is scorched, out of the very heart of vine-

yards and orangeries rise columns of smoke and steam, the hiss of lava jars on the music of summer, and the scent of sulphur mingles with the scent of roses. ‘As for the earth, out of it cometh bread; and under it is turned up as it were fire.’ Beneath all this opulence of colour, minstrelsy, fragrance, rages a colossal furnace, and only the other year a terrible earthquake showed how much is still to be feared from this fathomless abyss of flame and fury. This singular region is no inapt image of our present civilization. Let us freely rejoice in all triumphs over brutality and barbarism, in all that in our midst which is pure and bright, in all the gold and blue of our laws and literature and life, but let us keep in mind that ‘in the most civilized country upon earth the civilization is but skin deep,’¹ and let us not disregard the many signs before our eyes at this very hour of the seething abyss beneath our feet. Our civilization is a paradise within a crater, and the wisest men know best how thin is the crust which divides from raging depths, how easily the slow, bright growths of generations may be swallowed up as in a moment.

The second assumption, viz., that science has opened a new view of life and given fresh guarantees for morality, so that if human passions are released from the discipline of religion they will be subjected to another discipline yet more authoritative and severe, is pure assumption only. The idea is very general that science has discovered a firmer basis for morality, given it more exquisite definition, strengthened it with new sanctions, vivified it with the rich poetry of a larger sympathy and a more generous hope; such an idea being, however, entirely erroneous. What is

¹ Pike’s *History of Crime*, vol. ii., p. 381.

it in modern science which inspires fresh confidence in the stability of morals? Is it the scientific doctrine of nature that lends fresh authority to the moral system? Listen to Edmond Scherer: 'If the distinction between the beautiful and the ugly, between the good and evil subsist, it is because these notions have only a relative value to us; but nature ignores these distinctions, she has neither justice nor pity, she is immoral, and that with the supreme immorality of indifference.' To the greater number of our philosophers nature is little better than a scandal. Is the fresh fount of moral inspiration to be found in the scientific doctrine of human nature which resolves the whole man into physiology? The mechanical conception of the universe, which involves the mechanical conception of man, leaving no place for human liberty by declaring freewill a psychological illusion, is in no eminent degree friendly to virtue. The resolution of man into automatism; taking out of him that divine thing called conscience, that imperial thing called will, substituting two nerves, and resolving the whole of human intelligence and behaviour into a system of nervous action and re-action, surely this conception of our nature neither suggests any grand philosophy of virtue nor supplies any precious impulse to virtue. A few weeks ago there was a burst of indignation in the public journals because a boy in one of the great schools had been punished for sneezing; our vigilant, virtuous journals were outraged inasmuch as they held sneezing to be an involuntary act. But if our atheistic science is correct all actions are involuntary, as involuntary as sneezing; they are the inevitable expressions of a long series of inevitable antecedents, and there

is neither place for praise nor blame in such a system. I dare say there is an art in sneezing, but if modern science has done no more for morality than to make it such an art, our debt to it is not large and our expectations from it need not be great.

But, perhaps, it is the scientific doctrine of history that is to give fresh emphasis to the several exactions of the moral category. This view of history teaches that the terrible doctrine of 'the survival of the fittest' which dominates nature prevails equally in the history of the race, victory being ever a question of strength and cunning, and not of those moral attributes which claim the admiration of mankind—and what re-inforcement does this view lend to virtue? There is truly little justification in the pages of history for the virtue that costs tears and martyrdom, if history is capable of no brighter interpretation than that of modern science. History, say men puzzled, pained by a thousand ghastly tragedies, History is less moral than nature. Is it then, finally, in the scientific doctrine of human life that we are to look for a luminous exposition of virtue and for a new, gracious ethical force? According to the popular doctrine everything is phenomenal, we can never recognise reality. The world is a show, history a dramatic record, men and women spectral actors; life shapes itself sometimes into a farce, much oftener into a tragedy, but, farce or tragedy, it is ever a mere spectacle, a thing of emptiness, illusion, momentariness. Now if this be true, if there is nothing beside masks, shadows, echoes, where is the ground for that virtue which involves most terrible sacrifices? You never think of praising or blaming an actor on account of the part he

plays on the stage, whether he is the robber or the robbed, the hero or the villain, the clown or the sage, the murderer or the murdered, it is a representation, there is no morality or immorality in the actors because of the parts they severally sustain, and on this score we give them neither pity nor praise, the part they play is equally indifferent. Now, if this human life be a spectacle, only a spectacle, unrelated to reality, where is the place for virtue, for praise, for blame? You never praise or blame actors except for the cleverness or otherwise with which they play their part, and the philosophy that teaches that morality at bottom is mere cleverness is not likely to produce any very sublime moral manifestations. You cannot root virtue in nothingness; if men are mere 'magnetic mockeries' and the universe unreal as a dream, truth is an illusion, righteousness also.

Mr. Leslie Stephen says: 'Whatever changes of opinion may be in store for us, we need not fear that any scientific conclusions can permanently lower our views of man's duty here.'¹ It is evident that, in his opinion, scientific conclusions at the moment do seem to lower our views of man's duty, although he assures us, on what grounds does not appear, they will not do so ultimately. Really, atheistic science has brought about a crisis in morality, and philosophic men are anxiously wondering what will be the practical outcome when the people generally take the same view of the universe and life as they take. The arrogant materialistic science of our day declares that physiology accounts for our whole personality, the soul being a tautology; that virtue is simply the instinct of

¹ *Essays*, p. 105.

self-preservation and the reproductive instinct in extreme elaboration ; that history is a record of theatrical figments ; that we men and women are blind puppets imagining ourselves to be real, great, free, when we are nothing of the kind, and that having strutted out our empty day we vanish into empty night ; and constantly hearing these doctrines urged in the name of science, we may reasonably be perplexed to understand in what way science gives any nobler view of life, or furnishes any new guarantee for a high morality. Science gives no reason for the most exalted rule of life, no special impulse to reach such a rule ; on the contrary, science, as we know it, has made great thinkers feel more keenly than ever the necessity of metaphysical and spiritual beliefs for the maintenance of morals, even when these thinkers cannot satisfy themselves that such beliefs are valid. Virtue is of all things most difficult and costly, the essence of it painful and perpetual self-renunciation, it calls for sacrifices which rend the soul, for heroism beyond that of battle-fields, and there is nothing in the modern scientific view of life to inspire a tempted soul in the hour and power of darkness. Says Victor Hugo : ‘ Virtue would be a form of insanity if behind man there were not a God.’

So far from new sanctions having been added to the moral code by recent theories of man and nature, the morality of the old paganism was more strongly supported and enforced than is that of contemporaneous paganism. The mythology of primitive times, the teaching of classical poets, the ethical speculations of ancient philosophers, recognising the divinity of truth and justice, and with a vivid conception of the wide range of the law of retribu-

tion, were, on the whole, far more favourable to moral life and action than is the atheistic science of our day which has managed so completely to empty the world of all real moral meaning.

The testimony of history to the fatal effect of scepticism on character is very clear. Mr. M. Arnold, with all his glorification of Greek culture, confesses: ‘ Apparently it was the Hellenic conception of human nature which was unsound, for the world could not live by it.’¹ No; with all the keenness of its insight and all the splendour of its expression, ‘ the world could not live by it.’ No more can the modern world live by a sceptical, indulgent philosophy; and it means ruin if we try. If history teaches that what men and nations fall by is want of conduct, it teaches with equal clearness that want of conduct follows the loss of faith in that transcending universe of which the living God is the centre and eternity the circumference. In one of his mad moods Comte sought to persuade his wife to step upon the Seine, assuring her she would find herself able to tread the waters. Madam declined; old experience denied the prophetic strain, and the lady remained on land to her comfort and safety—this latter we may be permitted to believe. Men like Mr. Leslie Stephen, with a constitutional cheerfulness, invite us to renounce our spiritual faith and trust ourselves to instinct and circumstances, but surely history justifies our hesitation; with wrecks of majestic empires floating on the stream, and corpses of imperial forms rotting in the mud, we may well be excused taking a step which has proved fatal successively to the grandest civilizations the world has seen. In the sphere of politics history often

¹ *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 138.

seems hopelessly irrelevant and unhelpful, but on moral questions we may consult her with great confidence and advantage ; if history is worth anything to us at all, it is worth everything here. Lucidities and urbanities did not save the Greek, and they will not save us ; peoples full of faculty and force, of genius and passion, are not to find guidance and salvation in a daisy chain. Profound and wide-reaching must be the considerations which chasten the mighty passions of mankind, and direct those passions to ends of glory and peace. History shows in bold characters none may misread, that when a people does not like to retain God in their knowledge, and construe the science of life into a science of indulgence, character rapidly declines, and with character all the glory of man descends into the dust. ‘ Now all these things happened unto them as figures, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall ’ (1 Cor. x. 11. 12).

II.

THE CURRENT TREATMENT OF MORALS IN SCEPTICAL SCHOOLS confirms our belief in the pernicious influence of scepticism on character.

We have the summary of Christian morality in the Ten Commandments; revelation at large is the development and enforcement of those Commandments; the Lord Jesus Christ is the sublime illustration of them. Now it is very remarkable of late how constantly and severely the law of Sinai has been criticised. Speaking of St. Paul's process of conviction of sin, Mr. Matthew Arnold says, 'Matters became only worse by the exhibition of the Mosaic law, the offspring of a moral sense more poignant and stricter, however little it might show of subtle insight and delicacy, than the moral sense of the mass of mankind.'¹ Mr. Arnold thus discovers that the moral law 'shows little of subtle insight and delicacy.' Mr. J. B. Crozier complains, 'The Ten Commandments are a very crude code of morals for modern civilization.'² And in another work by the same writer, we read, 'But when we say that the moral and intellectual are one, the term "moral" is apt, perhaps, to be misleading. It is associated in the common mind with the mere external observance of the Ten Commandments, and although this is indispensable to the well-being, nay, to

¹ *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

² *Civilization and Progress*, p. 286.

the very existence of society, we are liable to forget that it is after all only the lowest form of morals, and may co-exist with the entire absence of all that constitutes nobility of soul.¹ The Commandments constitute, so we are to understand, ‘a very crude code of morals, the lowest form of morals.’ These bold attacks on the Decalogue are increasingly common. Some little while ago whilst looking round one of our grand cathedrals the verger drew our attention to a certain wall as being somewhat bare and needing decoration, adding the remark, ‘You know the Ten Commandments might be painted up, and the Ten Commandments, sir, are better than nothing.’ Our new moralists seem generally to share the opinion of the æsthetic ecclesiastic, they hold the Commandments better than nothing, still thinking the space might be covered with grander characters.

These criticisms of the Decalogue are supposed to spring from an enthusiasm of virtue; we are expected to regard them as evincing a desire for a morality more profound, delicate, comprehensive, authoritative, influential, than the morality with which revelation has made us familiar. Many freethinkers vehemently aim at destroying the evangelical faith on pretence of establishing a purer morality; they accuse theologians of having been busy with metaphysics instead of developing righteousness; they zealously affirm the time has come for the establishment of a nobler, more delicate, and more unselfish virtue. They affect to be animated by a pure jealousy for practical goodness, and write contemptuously about faith in their passion for character. ‘The monopoly of moral influence is withdrawn from the

¹ *The Religion of the Future*, p. 52.

Christian Church by systems of independent morality,' says the author of *Natural Religion*; and these systems of independent morality affect a breadth, purity, grandeur, which put to shame the course, archaic, dull morality of Sinai.

How much truth is there in these assumptions? Are these champions of heresy champions of character? Is it to raise the ideal of duty, the standard of conduct, that they strive to banish faith? Are these new moral conceptions such as to inspire confidence as to the future of character, should these conceptions prevail? We are entirely convinced to the contrary. Carefully examine the ethical theories and notions of the day, so freely and confidently put forth by freethinkers of various schools, and it will soon be seen how defective they are, and how ruinous must prove their adoption. Morality is in as much peril as faith. In the Old Testament a reversion to idolatry always meant a reversion to immorality, and the signs are clear again that a reversion to atheism is a reversion to inferiority of character and laxity of life. Carefully consider these rare theories of duty, put aside all the glozing words and flowers of rhetoric, and you are startled to find morality has been placed on lower ground, that all ethics are ethics of the dust, that strange liberties have been taken with the law, that its range has been narrowed, that it is no longer inculcated as of first and last importance, that its imperativeness is subdued, that the rewards of obedience are no longer certain and splendid, that the penalties of disobedience are no longer appalling. We have the least reason to expect from these ethical speculations any raised type of character; on the contrary, we have every reason for alarm on account of that character which we truly feel

to be our most precious inheritance. In attempting to make this clear I will chiefly quote from some half-dozen representative freethinkers whose works are in the hands of the general reading public.

1. Christianity maintains the *distinctness and independence* of the moral law, and this position is challenged by modern infidelity. In holding by the Ten Commandments the Church of God declares the law of conduct to be as real, at least, as any of the laws of nature, and it declares likewise that the law of conduct is as distinct from any intellectual law as the intellectual is distinct from the physical. The law of conduct is a master fact, a sovereign reality, not to be confounded with any other law whatsoever. Revelation sets more than the diameter of all the worlds between the mental and the moral; and certainly observation seems to bear out the theory of the separateness of the intellectual and moral, for, on the one side, eminent goodness is often found in men of moderate intellectual capacity, whilst, on the other side, the most brilliant intellectual gifts go with singular moral weakness and debasement. Now one great effort of the sceptical school is to deny the reality of the moral law by breaking down the distinction between the mental and the moral, considering the two as one. This was one great error Carlyle learnt from his German masters. Prophecy proved a snare to Edward Irving, but a noble letter written by him to Carlyle in 1821 reveals keen observation and prescience. ‘The German poets may not be what they are reported of. At the same time I am daily becoming more convinced that in all the literature of our own which, it is said, holds of the German school, there is something most poisonous to all

that in this country has been named virtue, and still more to the distinctions of conduct which religion makes. It seems to me there is a jumble or confusion of former distinctions, as if they were preparing for some new ones. They have the language of the highest purity, even of the most sacred religion, in communion with the blackest crimes; and the presence of the former is thought somehow or other to compensate for the latter. There is an attempt, too, I think, at two standards of moral judgment—one for the man of genius and literature, the other for the vulgar.¹

Irving saw very clearly the drift of the new philosophy, and all he surmised and predicted came into fulfilment in the very man to whom that letter was written. ‘It seems to me there is a jumble or confusion of former distinctions.’ Yes; and one most important part of this confusion discerned by Irving was the confusion of the moral with the intellectual. Men of great intellectual power, it is assumed, are possessed of a corresponding moral power; a great intellect is ever accompanied by a true and great heart. In the view of this school it is blasphemy to say a man has an immoral soul whilst he goes on conducting victorious campaigns, writing magnificent dramas, painting masterpieces; the intellectual and moral are never separated; the great thinker is necessarily rich in moral force and merit; and all brilliant achievement must be regarded as the sign of a soul essentially noble. ‘I do not defend Bacon or Goethe in their delinquencies, but I know, against all biography, that precisely what intellect they had must have rested on and been proportioned to their moral

¹ *Life of Carlyle*, vol. i., p. 134.

qualities.'¹ As Irving says: 'There is a confusion of former distinctions.' The former distinctions were: conscience is a faculty to be considered apart from reason; the imagination is one thing, the will another; technical cleverness is not conduct; intellectual merit must not be classified with moral excellence. These distinctions are at least as old as Sinai, they are not lost sight of for a moment throughout the whole of revelation, and they are steadily maintained by the Church of God to-day. If at the railway station or elsewhere you take a ticket of your weight, it is well understood that ticket cannot be used as a voucher for your intellectual competence: if that were allowed, some would get far too much credit for their abilities, and others, perhaps, far too little. The physical and intellectual are two spheres, equally real, but not to be confounded; you must not regard the gravity of the man as any index of his mind. No one can persuade us that the strength of the arm is any expression of the strength of the understanding, that the measure of the chest is the measure of the soul, that the capacity of the lungs demonstrates the capacity of the mind; we know it altogether false to insist that Daniel Lambert being the heaviest of men was also the greatest of modern thinkers. So we hold the intellectual and moral constitute two spheres, equally real, but not to be confounded in thought; we cannot accept intellectual acts as signs of moral force or merit any more than we can receive tickets of weight as certificates of genius and scholarship.

The consequence of this confusion of the intellectual and moral is really the denial of the separateness and reality of

¹ *The Religion of the Future*, p. 52.

the moral law, and the practical consequences flowing from such confusion must be terrible. It has been said the true idea of marriage in England is, ‘the man and his wife are one, and the man is that one;’ so when we are told by the sceptical school that intellect and morals are one, we are not long in discovering that intellect is that one, morals sinking into a very subordinate position. We have a striking illustration of this in Carlyle’s own writings. As a writer of history Carlyle encountered a number of those equivocal characters who, possessed of exceptional intellectual power, are yet sadly deficient in morals; they reveal various knowledge, rich invention, exquisite taste, immense energy, superlative executive skill, and yet are grievously lacking in beneficence, chastity, temperance, and kindred virtues. When Carlyle came to paint these heroes, who were at once intellectual kings and moral blackguards chargeable with grossest vices, what did the historian or biographer do? Did he renounce his theory of the identity of the moral and intellectual, and admit that a man might be richly gifted in brain and yet terribly lacking in moral perception, force, and faithfulness? Instead of doing this, he glorified the talents of his heroes and minimized their moral defects, allowed their detestable acts to pass swiftly out of sight, touched their vices with a light hand, palliated those vices as superficial irregularities, and exhausted the resources of his impassioned eloquence and picturesque phraseology to show that, despite their glaring defects, his heroes were still honourable men, large-minded, big-hearted,—in the truest sense, moral men, their defectiveness being simply in matters of conventional virtue. ‘The German poets,’ said Edward Irving, ‘have the language of the

highest purity, even of the most sacred religion, in communion with the blackest crimes ; and the presence of the former is thought somehow or other to compensate for the latter.' Most true description of Carlyle's own writings. His theory of the identity of the intellectual and moral compelled him to find heroes in some of the worst men who have ever lived, and instead of boldly condemning their brutality, sensuality, tyranny, and corruption, he virtually affirms that, despite their shortcomings, they were profoundly moral men, only their virtues were not the virtues of the vulgar ; their morality did not manifest itself on the conventional side in continence, temperance, philanthropy, but in superb generalship, immortal epics, dramatic actions, and in such achievements we must find atonement for blackest vices and crimes. Everywhere in Carlyle's appraisement of men, genius is exalted at the expense of character. To deny the reality and independence of the moral law by merging it in the intellectual is to give licence of conduct to clever people, a licence of which they are never slow to avail themselves, and we may be sure there will prove to be a great many clever people in the world the moment cleverness is accepted as an apology for licentiousness. A doctrine of this nature cannot be confined to a few of the topmost stars of the intellectual firmament, but in due course, by an inevitable logic, men of every mental grade would claim to set whatever measure of power they possessed over against the virtues in which they were deficient.

All dispassionate judges must acknowledge the vast practical value of a distinct law of conduct standing clear of all complications, and insisting on right action alone.

In the vast congregation assembled on Sabbath morning in the Church of God throughout the earth, all kinds of distinctions exist, distinctions of intellectual power, of culture, rank, wealth, age, country, calling. But when the Commandments are read, all these distinctions are ignored; a majestic standard of conduct is exalted with stern simplicity, and by this standard all alike must test themselves in the presence of God—no distinction exists except that of moral good and evil. If you have kept the law of righteousness in its various exactions, however poor and desolate you may be, you go down to your house with the sense of self-respect and the answer of peace; if you have failed to keep that law, you become painfully conscious of the vanity of every material and social advantage, your massive wealth, your brilliant title, your singular learning and skill, your deeds of renown, all are dust and ashes, you are a guilty wretch and know yourself to be such—the greater your gifts, the greater your condemnation. The salutary effect of placing this simple issue before the million every seventh day is altogether incalculable; and we can regard only with consternation any attempt to sink the moral in the intellectual, and to grant absolution to sinners in proportion to their cleverness.

2. Christianity maintains the *sole supremacy* of the moral law—a position directly challenged by modern infidelity. The sole supremacy of the moral law is the burden of the Old Testament; the law of conduct is the highest law, nothing can be compared with it for importance, it is the absorbing question of life. The law of the spirit, the law of life, is of such sovereign significance as to exclude the consideration of every other subject: the

science of Egypt, the art of Babylon, the commerce of Tyre are only slightly noticed, never discussed; the moral standard is everything, and the application of that standard —how men succeeded and failed in character, why they succeeded or failed, what success or failure meant. All greatness, honour, felicity, hope, are bound up with obedience. It is identically the same with the New Testament. That Testament is altogether occupied with the presentation of Jesus Christ as the sublime example of the law, and in showing how men through Him may attain moral glory. The significance of Christ is altogether moral. His name is not associated with the philosophy, the literature, or the science of the world. He occupied a position far above them. A formal connection with any or all of them would have degraded and not exalted Him. Not that Christ, or the religion which He founded, in its principles or spirit, was hostile to them; but He was personally apart from them, and His greatness belonged to quite another sphere—one infinitely higher.¹ Unknown to government, philosophy, science, art, literature, Christ shines forth in surpassing glory, altogether the glory of righteousness. The Bible throughout has but one theme—the law of righteousness, and this it emphatically and consistently declares the one transcendent, absorbing, incomparable, everlasting question.

But what are we taught in the new systems of morality advocated by unbelieving schools? That conduct is the supreme question of life in the sense of revelation they take leave to doubt; they are satisfied some other matters are of equal importance with morality, nay, of superior importance.

¹ See Young, *The Christ of History*, p. 217.

In a letter written by George Eliot in 1862, we find this: ‘I suppose no wisdom the world will ever find out will make Paul’s words obsolete—“Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.”’¹ The world moves fast, however, and has already discovered the wisdom George Eliot thought inaccessible. M. Renan, in this very year of grace, celebrating at a public dinner the supremacy of science, remarked: ‘St. Paul has said that there were three great things—faith, hope, and charity, but that the greatest was charity. He (M. Renan), on the other hand, would affirm that the three great things were goodness, beauty, and truth, and that the greatest of all was truth. Virtue and art,’ he continued, ‘did not exclude strong illusions, but truth is that which actually is, and science still remained the most serious thing in the world.’ So in M. Renan’s appraisement goodness stands at the bottom, and science at the top. Many sceptics, however, dispute this syllabus which places science at the top as the most serious thing in the world. ‘If we look at the history of the modern theory of culture’ (says the author of *Natural Religion*), ‘we shall perceive that its characteristic feature is precisely the assertion of the religious dignity of art and science. That German gospel which the Puritan Carlyle preached to us, with a solemnity which seemed scarcely appropriate to it, was an assertion of beauty and truth as deserving to be worshipped along with duty. Goethe and Schiller habitually apply the language of religion to art, and in the whole school which they represent may be traced an impulse to create a new organization for the worship of beauty and truth,—worships omitted, as

¹ *Life*, vol. iii., p. 138.

they held, in Christianity. They turn their backs on the Church, and study to make the theatre and the university into centres of the higher life. And yet it is quite alien to their way of thinking to undervalue moral goodness, or even to treat the Church, so far as it is the organ of moral influence, with any hostility. In their minds, beauty, truth, and goodness are of one family; only they oppose the Puritanism which sets goodness at an unapproachable height above its sisters, and they are disposed rather to give the highest place to beauty.¹ This time, then, the protest is against ‘the Puritanism which sets goodness at an unapproachable height above its sisters,’ and beauty is at the top. Culture is a threefold devotion to beauty, goodness, and science, the greatest of these being beauty.

We have not done yet. Mr. M. Arnold argues that literature must be at the top—the knowledge of the best that has been spoken and written in history, philosophy and poetry. The special distinction of the greatest men in science is that they seized the one great primary law which underlay the diverse phenomena of the particular sphere they elected to study—as Newton discovered gravitation. To this royal circle Christ belongs, whilst He yet stands infinitely exalted above its most illustrious names, because He discovered for us the one grand law of the abiding universe. Marcus Aurelius wrote: ‘Ever remember this, a happy life depends not on many things.’ Christ, with glorious originality, went a whole world beyond this, and seized the central law of human life and destiny: ‘One thing is needful,’ i.e. the love of Himself, the love of righteousness. Mr. Arnold, however, scorns the idea of the

¹ *Natural Religion*, p. 146.

'one thing needful,' and affirms that two things are needful, viz. Hebraism, the tendency of which is towards doing, and Hellenism, the tendency of which is towards perceiving and knowing. 'Hebraism strikes too exclusively upon one string in us. Hellenism does not address itself with serious energy enough to morals and righteousness. For our totality, for our general perfection, we need to unite the two.'¹ Two things are essential ! a vast and fatal departure from the simplicity that is in Christ. But note further, that whilst there are two things—Hebraism, the uppermost idea of which is conduct and obedience, and Hellenism, the chief feature of which is intellectualism—Mr. Arnold gives the palm to Hellenism : 'Whilst Hebraism seizes upon certain plain, capital intimations of the universal order, and rivets itself, one may say, with unequalled grandeur of earnestness and intensity on the study and observance of them, the bent of Hellenism is to follow, with flexible activity, the whole play of the universal order, to be apprehensive of missing any part of it, of sacrificing one part to another, to slip away from resting on this or that intimation of it, however capital.'² Again he writes : 'The Greeks arrived, though failing to give adequate practical satisfaction to the claims of man's moral side, at the idea of a comprehensive adjustment of the claims of both sides in man—the moral as well as the intellectual, of a full estimate of both, and of a reconciliation of both ; an idea which is philosophically of the greatest value, and the best of lessons for us moderns.'³ He then proceeds to declare that in England, and especially in the

¹ *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

² *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 132.

³ *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 155.

Nonconformist Church, we have dwelt too exclusively upon strictness of conscience, and it is now our duty to care for sweetness and light. ‘Now, and for us, it is a time to Hellenize, and to praise knowing; for we have Hebraized too much, and have overvalued doing.’¹ Mr. Arnold cannot shut his eyes to the painful failure of Hellenism in practical moral force, but he thinks the long discipline of Hebraism has so strengthened us that Hebraism may now take second rank, although we must stand prepared to give it the first rank to-morrow. Everybody knows with what sneers, gibes, flouts, and infinite vulgar nonsense, Mr. Arnold ridicules the more Puritan section of the nation for its sympathy with the righteousness of the Bible, rather than with the literature of imagination and taste.

So now it stands thus: goodness, beauty, science, these three, and the greatest of these is science, says Renan; goodness, truth, and beauty, these three, and the greatest of these is beauty, says Goethe; goodness, beauty, and literature, these three, and the greatest of these is literature, says Mr. Arnold. But the Church of God knows nothing of ‘these three’; it knows one thing only, to it belongs the sublime monotony of righteousness. According to its creed, righteousness is the essential, supreme, final law of development for the individual, the nation, the race; wealth, arms, art, literature, trade, government, and what else, being left to take their chance, which they are then best able to do, under the ordering of the natural action of the sovereign law of righteousness. The Church of Christ never places goodness above science, art, or literature, for the simple reason it admits no possibility of comparison

¹ *Culture and Anarchy*, p. xlviij.

between the significance of the moral and the intellectual ; it places goodness at an awful unapproachable height above all genius whatsoever ; its eye is so filled with the splendour of holiness, it cannot see anything else.

It is easy to foresee the serious consequences of placing anything on an equality with character, much more the exaltation of any form of intellect above moral principle and obligation. In the Christendom of to-day character is the supreme consideration—nothing is to be compared with it for a moment. Whilst we duly honour our intellectual masters, and exult in their splendid works, we yet know conscience is more than taste, and moral blamelessness more to be chosen than all cleverness of eye, or lip, or touch. Our last veneration is not reserved for the masterpiece of Raphael, but for human lives transfigured by the Transfigurer ; our purest delight is not in the sculptures of the Parthenon, but in temples of the Holy Ghost adorned with the fine characters of moral grace, although we may need to go into a back-street to find them ; harmonized passions are to us sweeter than all music of strings and organs ; the well-ordering of conduct is the queen of sciences ; a practical moral sense is impressive beyond all literature ; and garments ‘unspotted by the flesh,’ ‘unspotted by the world,’ although worn by the humblest, seem to us richer than the brocades of fashion, the singing-robcs of poets, the purple of greatness. But all this is to be changed, and another beauty is to share our reverence with the beauty of holiness, another wisdom is to be preferred to that understanding which consists in departing from evil. And what must be the practical consequence of this profound change of feeling ? Surely when scepticism has taken effect, when

science, art, and literature are exalted above character, talent above conscience and obedience, character must suffer immediate deterioration as in ancient Greece and Italy, and for the loss of that glory remain no compensations.

3. Christianity maintains the *universality* of the moral law—another position challenged by modern scepticism. The law of Moses claimed dominion over the whole man in all the reaches of his life and action, claimed authority over every act and word and thought. To affirm the Jewish conception of righteousness was a narrow and rigid one, centring mainly in what they called judgment, and that evil for them did not take in all faults whatever of heart and character, is to affirm what is obviously untrue. The Jewish conception of righteousness was neither rigid nor narrow; for in reading the Old Testament we are perpetually reminded that the Jew was not only familiar with the chief notes of character, but also with those many semi-tones whose happy introduction makes the full music of moral perfection. The law of Moses as republished by Christ suffers no limitation to its exceeding breadth. It lays obligation upon human nature to come to its best at all points, it requires handsome action in all particulars, in all places, at all times. The Christian type of character no more favours the passive than it does the heroic, the contemplative than the active; it includes every grace, for it possesses the secret of balancing and blending all the seemingly contradictory elements of noble character. He who possesses the Spirit of Christ has the essence of universal goodness, and every virtue will find expression in him in turn touched to finest issues. The famous violin of the Hardanger region has its four delicate under-strings, whose vibrations add

weird harmonies to the tones produced by the stroke of the bow on the four principal strings; so, a nature developed and perfected by communion with Christ not only responds to the great appeals of common veracity and justice, but, full of fine chords, makes all that delicate music which discerning souls know to be the music of upper spheres.

The critics of Christianity are, however, strangely discontented with its range of moral obligation, and promise us something much more expansive and thorough. Says the author of *Natural Religion*: ‘As Christianity was wider than Judaism, so the religion of the present age must be wider than Christianity.’ And again: ‘Natural religion then is no mere dull morality, for, in the first place, it is far wider than any morality, being as wide as modern culture.’ Mr. M. Arnold, to the same effect: ‘Culture is a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest. Here culture goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived by us.’¹ Passages of this nature would seem to imply that at length we were coming to something valuable; that culture, which is a study of perfection, of general perfection, of harmonious perfection, was really able to carry us triumphantly to unascended moral heights, to introduce us to the Canaan of righteousness in its yet undiscovered lengths and breadths. A very slight study of our new moral masters is quite sufficient to dispose of these glowing expectations, and show that all this specious talk of perfection ends by introducing into practical morals a most fatal doctrine.

¹ *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 13.

Says Mr. M. Arnold : ‘The difficulty of religion extends to rightness in the whole range of what we call *conduct*; in three-fourths, therefore, at the very lowest computation, of human life. The only doubt is whether we ought not to make the range of conduct wider still, and to say it is four-fifths of human life, or five-sixths. But it is better to be under the mark than over it; so let us be content with reckoning conduct as three-fourths of human life.’¹ Mr. Arnold’s anxiety to be accurate is pathetic. *Literature and Dogma* is a vehement protest against the introduction of metaphysics into religion, and the morality of the Church is condemned along with its theology. Still we contend the excessive introduction of metaphysics into theology, unfortunate as such over-refinements may be, was never fraught with any such danger as arises from this obtrusion of arithmetic into the region of morals. We have no quarrel with Mr. Arnold about the exact measurement of the range of conduct, in fixing which he reveals such laudable anxiety. Some might hold conduct to be the half of life, whilst others, just as fairly, for anything we can see, might insist on reckoning it the fifteen-sixteenths of life; still we will not debate about express relative proportions and scientific frontiers, the fatal point is—the admission of arithmetic into such a question at all.

Now suppose we allow that conduct or righteousness, for Mr. Arnold uses the words indifferently, is three-fourths of life, the question instantly presents itself, What is that one-fourth of life which is not conduct? Mr. Arnold tells us, and we must be prepared for a little more arithmetic. ‘As the discipline of *conduct* is three-fourths of life, for

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 12.

our æsthetic and intellectual disciplines, real as these are, there is but one-fourth of life left; and if we let art and science divide this one-fourth fairly between them, they will have just one-eighth of life each.¹ It is difficult to believe that in all this elaborate folly Mr. Arnold is serious, the attentive reader discerns something very like a suppressed chuckle, yet as Mr. Arnold is not scoffing at sacred things in this place, but putting forth views of his own, we must take him as serious. So then, the one-fourth of life removed from under the law of conduct, that is, of moral obligation, is our æsthetic and intellectual discipline, and these take an eighth of lawlessness each. All this pleases the culture people mightily; they are unspeakably delighted to discover a space, however restricted, where they may freely disport themselves. ‘Artists,’ we are told, ‘are bitterly complaining of the yoke of the reigning orthodoxy, of the primness and suspiciousness of its morality.’ According to Mohammedan tradition the peacock opened the wicket of Paradise, and let in the devil; once more the peacock, in the shape of æstheticism, waits to render the destroyer a similar service, letting him loose on the civilization of Christendom. We do not for a moment believe that in fencing off this eighth of life Mr. Arnold contemplates the gross uses to which the neutral ground would be put, but that it would soon become a veritable devil’s acre few can doubt. On this enchanted spot the painters who are sick of social decorums and prudish crotchetts could stand to repeat the nasty, nude figures which disgrace the French Salon, and which would soon disgrace our Academy if we had not grace to resist such innovations; on this

¹ *Literature an Dogma*, p. 135.

privileged spot also the realistic novelists could shoot their erotic filth ; here too the charming Shelley Society could erect their stage, representing the ‘Cenci’ and other monstrous themes ; and on this territory, so opportunely granted, the ‘Fleshly School’ of poetry could establish itself, satiating itself with wild sensual melodies. It is equally disturbing to contemplate the destination of ‘the eighth’ allotted to science. Doctrines like euthanasia, suicide, vivisection, and other ‘fruits of philosophy,’ would here find welcome space to root themselves and bear their fruits of Sodom.

But if one-fourth of life is free from moral control, does Mr. Arnold think that neutral space can be monopolized by scientists and artists ? Political economy has long maintained the distribution of the profits of industry depends on natural laws, with which morality has nothing to do, and unquestionably the manufacturer and shopkeeper have as much right to the libertine one-fourth as the poet, painter, or scientist. The statesman also may claim the sphere of diplomacy as beyond moral sovereignty, as science is, and none may reasonably resist his claim. And whilst it is easy to affirm arbitrarily, that eating, drinking, leisure, money, the intercourse of the sexes, are matters of conduct and subject to moral discipline, yet when pleasure comes in and claims the green strip of exemption for her special delectation, no one can reasonably demur.

That any part of a man’s life and action is simply un-moral, non-moral, is a heresy of heresies, yet it is a choice article in the creed of the modern sceptical school. No writer of our day is more intensely bitter or more glaringly unjust in his treatment of the Christian faith than Mr. John Morley ; but we now adduce Mr. Morley

simply as a representative moralist of the pronounced sceptical school, and proceed to show from his writings how scepticism limits morality by claiming much in human character and action as non-moral. This distinguished writer says: ‘Puritanism is a system which has raised monstrous floods of sour cant round about us, and hardened the hearts and parched the sympathies of men by blasts from theological deserts.’ He farther informs us that we are as a nation ‘distinguished among all nations for the Pharisaism, Puritanism, and unimaginative narrowness of its judgments on conduct and types of character’¹ He thus illustrates what he means by our ‘unimaginative narrowness of judgment’: ‘One might suppose, from the tone of opinion among us, not only that the difference between right and wrong marks the most important aspect of conduct, which would be true; but that it marks the only aspect of it that exists, or that is worth considering, which is most profoundly false. Nowhere has Puritanism done us more harm than in thus leading us to take all breadth, and colour, and diversity, and fine discrimination, out of our judgments of men—reducing them to thin, narrow, and superficial pronouncements upon the letter of their morality. . . . No excess of morality, we may be sure, has followed this excessive adoption of the exclusively moral standard.

. . . We have simply got for our pains a most unlovely leanness of judgment, and ever since the days when this temper set in until now, when a wholesome rebellion is afoot, it has steadily and powerfully tended to straiten character, to make action mechanical, and to impoverish art. As if there were nothing admirable in a man save unbroken

¹ *Miscellanies*, vol. i., p. 267.

obedience to the letter of the moral law, and that letter read in our own casual and local interpretation ; and as if we had no faculties of sympathy, no sense for the beauty of character, no feeling for broad force and full-pulsing vitality. . . . A character is much else besides being virtuous or vicious. In many of the characters in which some of the finest and most singular qualities of humanity would seem to have reached their furthest height, their morality was the side least worth discussing. . . . Moral imperfection is ever a grievous curtailment of life, but many exquisite flowers of character, many gracious and potent things, may still thrive in the most disordered scene. . . . There is a point of view so lofty and so peculiar, that from it we are able to discern in men and women something more than, and apart from, creed and profession and formulated principle; which indeed directs and colours this creed and principle as decisively as it is in its turn acted on by them, and this is their character or humanity. The least important thing about Johnson is that he was a Tory; and about Burns, that he drank too much and was incontinent.¹

We are taught then by this passage, saturated with moral error, that there is a point of view so ‘lofty and so peculiar’ that we lose sight of men’s morality and discern what is more interesting, their humanity; we lose sight of Burns’s debauchery as a least important thing, and behold only his ‘broad force and pulsating vitality.’ Mr. Morley farther tells us, that in modern literature we ‘see an increasing tendency to mount to this higher point of view’—this point of view in which we regard men as non-moral, and consider chiefly their imagination, skill, and humour.

¹ *Miscellanies*, vol. i., p. 183.

We are not anxious to deny the existence of this tendency, all we affirm is, that if modern society ever comes to think a character is much else besides being virtuous or vicious, that the morality of a man is often the side least worth considering, that 'the least important thing about Burns was that he drank too much and was incontinent,' if society ever mounts to this 'high and peculiar point of view,' in which something called humanity is recognised instead of moral character; then, we say, from that lofty and peculiar point of view, that devil's pinnacle of illusive vision, society will drop into the dirtiest ditch that swallowed the strength and glory of the ancient world. 'Burns,' says Mr. Morley, 'was drunken and unchaste and thriftless,' but the greatest thinkers fix on his broad, rich character and leave fulmination against these vices to 'the hack moralist of the pulpit or the press, with whom words are cheap, easily gotten, and readily thrown forth.'

One-fourth of our nature, one-fourth of our time, one-fourth of our action, exempt from the rule of conduct—what does this strange regulation mean? What devilry would not be worked out in this region of self-will? Mr. Arnold smiled celestially as if he were about to conduct us up the spiral to some rarer paradisal sphere, and instead of that, he opens a door into hell. The Old Testament knows nothing of this partition of three-fourths. 'No people ever felt so strongly as the people of the Old Testament, the Hebrew people, that conduct is three-fourths of our life and its largest concern.'¹ Nothing can be wider of the truth; such a conception was utterly foreign to the Hebrew people; there is no hint of such a thing in the Old

¹ *Literature and Dogma.*

Testament ; the Hebrew people felt conduct was the whole concern of life. Jesus Christ claims the sanctification of the whole man, the ordering of the whole life in righteousness in every minute act, down to the latest moment. The Apostles cherished the same comprehensive absolute view. ‘Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God’ (1 Cor. x. 31). Morality is everywhere through the whole range of action,—commercial, domestic, artistic, literary, intellectual, recreative, political,—morality is everywhere, and everywhere alike, the first word of spiritual religion and the last. When culture pretends to insist on the perfection of the whole man, it is simply stealing language, which in the lips of Christianity means something ; but when it goes on to tell us that righteousness is three-fourths of life, it suddenly becomes original, and gives expression to one of the most immoral sophisms ever uttered.

4. In maintaining the Commandments, the Church of God maintains the *realism* of the moral law—and this vital position is challenged by modern infidelity. The Old Testament sets forth the value of doing—of practical, positive obedience ; in a thousand places it enjoins and enforces, with a solemnity altogether its own, tangible, substantial duty ; it knows nothing of morality unspoken, of morality undemonstrated in actual life. It is the same with the New Testament. Neither Christ nor His Apostles have a word of recognition for an ideal potential morality which fails to vindicate itself on the stage of action in the sober light of day. ‘Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : but whoso-

ever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. v. 19). 'He that hath My Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me' (John xiv. 21). 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth' (1 John i. 6). 'He that committeth sin is of the devil' (1 John iii. 8).

Our modern ethical teachers do not, however, acquiesce in this scriptural view: they recognise in certain men a *latent* morality, even whilst these men are violating all the positive precepts of the moral law. Carlyle very clearly explains their position. 'As it is but a small portion of our thinking that we can articulate into thoughts, so again it is but a small portion, properly only the outer surface of our morality, that we can shape into action, or into express rules of action. Remark, farther, that it is but the correct coherent shaping of this outward surface, or the incorrect, incoherent, monstrous shaping of it, and no wise the moral force which shaped it, which lies under it, vague, indefinite, unseen, that constitutes what in common speech we call a moral conduct or an immoral. Hence, too, the necessity of tolerance, of insight, in judging of men. For the correctness of that same outer surface may be out of all proportion to the inward depth and quantity; nay, often enough they are in inverse proportion; only in some highly favoured individuals can the great endowment utter itself without irregularity.' Thus in great men, with whom inward and, as it were, latent morality must ever be the root and beginning of greatness, how often do we find a conduct defaced by many a moral impropriety, and have to love them with sorrow? Thus, too, poor Burns must record that almost the only noble-minded men he had ever met

with were among the class named blackguards.¹ According to this view, it is only the outer surface of our morality we can shape into action ; a moral force may lie at the back of all our conduct, however improper that conduct may be ; the correctness of the life may be in excess of the inward depth and quantity of moral feeling ; the irregularity of the life may be owing to some accident, constitutional or otherwise, which prevents the articulation of a vast underlying goodness. Hence the necessity of tolerance in judging men, for however deplorably defective may be their conduct, they may all the time be really full of a noble, unexpressed morality, as Burns records, ‘that almost the only noble-minded men he had ever met with were among the class named blackguards.’ Such is the strange position.

Can we admit this strangely equivocal doctrine of latent morality ? Can we on any persuasion allow that men are moral who signally fail to exhibit moral qualities and do moral works ? Can we rationally suspect morally blameless men to be wanting in depth and fulness of humanity, and credit licentious men with noble-mindedness ? ‘It is but a small portion of our thinking that we can articulate into thoughts ;’ true, but we always assign intellectual rank according to intellectual achievement, and not according to some supposed potential intellectuality. Never in any practical shape do we give men credit for latent genius —for some supposed power of the soul never discovered in actual execution. Some think themselves splendidly gifted, and put on airs in consequence, but seeing they do nothing, —write no poem, fashion no image, conduct no adventure, create no work with the strange gleam upon it,—we refuse

¹ *Life*, vol. ii., p. 228.

to accredit such, and treat their pretensions with indignation, or, perhaps, more commonly with good-natured contempt. All we can know of a man's intellectual power is by the measure of excellence found in his work, and we are sure intellectual superiority will betray itself one way or another. The village Hampden revealed his heroism, although the field of fight was narrow; the guiltless Cromwell was a prime minister in rustic parliaments, and on occasion, be sure, some purple patch on a luckless neighbour showed him not altogether free from blood-guiltiness; the inglorious Milton was not altogether mute, but spoke by homely hearth unwritten epics; the peasant of Newtonian capacity astonished his rude peers with secrets of the stars; 'hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,' proved their royalty by the masterly handling of less splendid but not less useful instruments; and those who might under more propitious circumstances have stirred a nation with the ecstasy of the living lyre, vindicated themselves as chief singers and minstrels of the parish church. We know all genius will imprint itself in some fashion on men's work; we can only accredit them with as much talent as they prove in action; and we refuse to believe that intellectual blackguardism—screams in vocalism, daubs in painting, discords in music, scamped work and hugger-mugger generally—is any sign of a brilliant brain.

But in the new morality we are to believe in the grandeur of the soul of 'the class named blackguards'—to believe in the intrinsic moral worth of spendthrifts, adulterers, and drunkards, it being understood their morality is grand, but subjective, while the propriety of your respectable people is very probably out of all proportion to their

inward depth and quantity of goodness. All may see that sophistries like these will soon work immorality, the worst men being ever ready to believe themselves good at heart. The Church of God, holding by the objective and positive commandments, and by the realistic virtue of the New Testament, whilst entirely disregarding any vague, unseen, indefinite virtue that never sees the light, gives to character and conduct surpassing preciousness in the eyes of society; and it must prove a vast disaster if any ideal, romantic, unverified, and unverifiable goodness should ever be accepted as a substitute for that goodness which proves itself by doing good and keeping itself unspotted by the world.

Not that the morality of the Christian Church can justly be accused of want of inwardness and vitality. When critics speak of the externalism of the Mosaic law, and snuff at the Commandments as a series of mere precepts, when they discount it as lacking fire and force, they wilfully forget its true character. ‘Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ (Matt. xxii. 36–39). The First Commandment opens into infinity—breaks up great deeps of soul and sentiment. ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.’ Here is nothing technical, literal, mechanical. Here is the fount of essential life; the charter of freedom; the secret of power and exuberance. Here is morality touched with emotion; law turned into music; here poet and mystic may for ever wonder and adore. Let it not be said that the legalism of the Old Testament

excludes spirituality and inwardness, feeling and poetry—its ethics are rooted in glorious, infinite, all-inspiring feeling. All this, of course, being not less true of the New Testament conception of virtue and obedience.

Yet, with an invariable insistence of spirituality, the Scriptures preach evermore simple, prosaic faithfulness of life, and will accept no hidden virtue in its place. ‘He that doeth righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous.’ Christianity with all its opulence of sentiment on one side, with all its horror of a mechanical propriety, of a heartless etiquette, on the other side, never admits the validity of a latent morality, of a goodness which fails to discover itself in a clean, beautiful, useful life. The admission that a latent morality may dwell richly in profligate men is a fundamental ethical heresy, and should such doctrine ever largely prevail, character must inevitably and profoundly suffer. If the day should ever come in which moral men are reckoned a superficial, spiritless set, whose exactitude of life is chiefly the consequence of a constitutional accident, and selfish, sensual souls like Byron, Burns, and Goethe, are recognised as full of a sublime morality which merely fails in articulation, the cause of practical virtue would be betrayed and wronged beyond all imagination. For it will never be permitted to confine these sinister doctrines to a few brilliant spirits at the top of the social scale; with ruthless logic, men in every stratum would claim the flattering unction, and urge their genial soul as full excuse for a lawless life. What is true for Byron, Voltaire, Goethe, is true for Jones and Robinson; and when all classes have become penetrated with the idea that character resembles the earth, where barrenness on the

surface is often indication of precious metals below, it will not be long before the painful culture of character is neglected, and the garden become a wilderness.

5. In maintaining the Commandments, the Church of God upholds the *definiteness* of the moral law—another position imperilled by modern scepticism. If explicitness is required anywhere, it is required in the law of duty. We are apt to be deceived by our senses in physical things, consequently a vast scientific apparatus is required to preserve us from miscalculation and fatal inference, but the danger of deception in moral life is yet far more imminent and needs to be guarded against with special vigilance. Here our passion and imagination so easily play us false—the gross fogs of appetite, the tinted vapours of fancy, ever filling the atmosphere, distorting and discolouring alike all objects, whether of aversion or desire. ‘There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death’ (Prov. xiv. 12). Into this world of mirage, where error is so easy and so fatal, the law of Sinai comes with definite, trenchant requirements. What is the secret of perfection, the rule of right, the path of duty? In the sharp categorical precepts of Moses, together with the rich commentary of revelation as a whole, we have the answer: ‘He that doeth these things shall live by them.’

But, it is objected, the Commandments of Sinai are crude and obsolete, altogether inadequate for an advanced civilization with its almost infinite novel differentiations of relationship and obligation. The law of Moses, it is said, did very well for the guidance of a rude people in primitive times, but is sadly wanting in adaptation to the complex life of to-day: we now require tests in the moral sphere similarly

exquisite with those of the modern chymist and astronomer. With parity of reason one might object to the grand canon of mathematics. The book of geometry Euclid wrote is still in use in our universities and schools, not a line added or erased, although the greatest philosophers and astronomers have lived since, and mathematics have been developed and applied to an extent not dreamed of when the famous Greek laid down his axioms, and gave illustrations and demonstrations in the abstruse science. So the grand cardinal laws of Moses may be considered elementary and undistinguishing, many great moralists have lived since they were given, and the evolution of society has brought about a myriad complications and entanglements, yet are those laws essential as ever, and the latest generation finds them unspeakably precious in determining all the new subtle problems of duty which arise out of the action and interaction of modern life. The most advanced mathematician of our day knows the indispensableness of Euclid, and every dispassionate modern moralist prizes the moral code of Israel as furnishing the most graphic definitions of that law of righteousness which abides the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

- ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.’
- ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’
- ‘Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.’
- ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’
- ‘Honour thy father and thy mother.’
- ‘Thou shalt not kill.’
- ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery.’
- ‘Thou shalt not steal.’

'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.'

'Thou shalt not covet.'

There is much clearness and applicability here for all generations, no matter what may be the ultimate elaboration of the social organism.

As to the complaint that Jesus Christ enriched morality with no new principle, it is altogether groundless. Shakespeare added no letter to the alphabet, but his marvellous genius lighted on verbal combinations which have instructed and delighted millions; Rubens, discovering no new pigment, elicited from the old colours strange visions of beauty; Handel introduced no new pipe into the organ, yet out of the ancient reeds he brought harmonies the world had not heard before, and which it longs to hear for ever. If Jesus Christ added to the moral code no new precept, if He gave to ethical science no new principle, who can read the New Testament without feeling what a wealth of moral ideas, perceptions, discriminations, the genius of Christ and of His Apostles developed out of the more general moral doctrine of the Old Testament? The attentive reader of the Gospels and Epistles is perpetually charmed with unexpected insights, appreciations, ideals, touching the spirit and behaviour of men, giving central truths most delicate applications, beating the wedges of gold of the Old Covenant into fine leaf that the whole expanse of human character and action, even into their remotest corner, might be covered with grace and glory. 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any

virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things' (Phil. iv. 8).

In what respect, let us now ask, is the new morality more definite, delicate, available, than the morality which has hitherto furnished our standards and gauges? We hear much about 'humanity'; but is humanity such a very clear test of men and things? Is not room left for much misconception and blundering when we have given up the old-fashioned idea of morality and taken to judge of methods of action by their supposed agreement with humanity? 'Humanity' is perhaps a more poetical word than 'morality,' but we may well question if there is any special guidance in it for practical life. The same may be said of other pet words and phrases of the new moralists. Theologians are accused of having mystified men in respect to questions of duty, and all that is wanted is, we are assured, to revert to native instincts and impulses. Not far from this City Road Chapel is another chapel, long given up to latitudinarian preaching. The authorities of that sanctuary have not painted over the pulpit the Decalogue, not the Lord's Prayer, not the Apostles' Creed, but a legend borrowed from Shakespere, and the whole duty of man is summed up in this sweet simplicity: 'To thine own self be true.' The boast of that sanctuary is, they have no creed; but surely this is a creed to all intents and purposes. Does it promise any very definite ideas of duty? Look into your own heart with its confusions, prejudices, passions, and consider what instruction and safety are there. The brief legend is indeed a creed, a terrible creed, promising no guidance into the ways of life, only betraying into Pandemonium.

We have just rehearsed the Ten Commandments, and thought them fairly unmistakeable, but what can we think of the clearness and utility of the new commandments designed to supersede them ?

Thou shalt possess sterling sincerity.

Thou shalt seek genuineness of vision and singular human quality.

Thou shalt cultivate a sense of the high and noble wherever it is found.

Thou shalt cherish a wise and deep sympathy with all forms of life.

Thou shalt exhibit candour, tolerance, magnanimity.

Thou shalt not lack the essential and radical virtues of sincerity and veracity.

Thou shalt covet a nature enriched with wise sympathy and many-coloured appreciativeness.

Thou shalt have breadth and colour and richness of character.

Thou shalt not give place to strictness of conscience, but aim at spontaneity of consciousness.

Thou shalt ever seek broad force and pulsating vitality.

Who cannot see that these fine phrases, these statutes of the new Decalogue to be musically rendered in the Church of the Future, are immensely inferior in practical value to the short, sharp, searching Commandments of God ? to the distinct, dogmatic regulations of Exodus ? Who does not see how they blur and render vague and obscure the truth so clear in revelation ? Some of these maxims selected from modern freethinking moralists may be true, but they are as terribly vague as if we steered by a sky and not by a star ; others of them are full of false suggestion, and to

take them for guidance would be to make shipwreck on the rock. Suppose them, however, to be truthful, what is the use of such rhetorical flourishes in this rough world to plain men and women? We know what the fruits of the Spirit are—purity, gentleness, meekness, faithfulness, charity; we know what these precious things of the sun are, substantial, sweet and yet sublime; but when we come to the precious things of the moon, the dainty clusters of ethical æstheticism, they are altogether too bright and good for human nature's daily food: we know what the righteousness of the saints is—fine linen, strong, homely and yet of celestial beauty; but these modern moralities, woven in philosophical looms, are Indian muslin, 'woven air,' not even making a show to cover our nakedness.

It is generally useful to call a spade a spade, but it is essential to be explicit and faithful in the use of language in the moral sphere. It is a matter of first importance to stigmatize vices by their right names, and save society from the fatal force of words; this Christianity does without hesitation or compromise, leaving no loophole for the escape of the guilty. It is impossible to estimate the moral value of the clear honest words of the Decalogue ringing throughout Christendom, making acute and accurate the moral sense of rich and poor, polished and rude, great and small. Mr. Arnold admonishes us, that 'we have fostered our Hebraizing instincts, our preference of earnestness of doing to delicacy and flexibility of thinking, too exclusively.' And 'what is most wanted by us at present is to make a stream of fresh thought play freely about our stock notions and habits.'¹ So soon, however, as we take to flexibility

¹ *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 174.

of thinking, and make streams of fresh thought to play freely about stock notions and habits, so soon as we make use of big vague phrases and epithets, instead of simple, direct, courageous, scriptural speech, all kinds of vices will escape detection and reprobation, as in Mongolian deserts the huntsman cannot strike the wild beasts because they are concealed and distorted by the peculiar atmosphere.

6. That *moral perfection is the condition of universal well-being* is another position maintained by the Church of God and denied by modern infidelity.

That moral perfection is the condition of all other perfection is the clear, steady teaching of the Old Testament. That the God of Israel was not indifferent to the material welfare of His people comes out in the record clearly enough, but that material welfare is ever represented as bound up with the faithfulness of the people to the moral law: so far as they were obedient to that law their prosperity, material and political, was assured; so far as they were unfaithful their worldly interests suffered. The great lesson is taught with eloquent iteration, with utmost variety of illustration, taught from beginning to end of Israel's history, that only through moral perfection does a nation realize material perfection, and that permanent well-being is otherwise impossible to the children of men. The teaching of the New Testament is equally explicit and emphatic. Christ taught that His heavenly Father and ours is alive to the worldly needs of His children, but He taught with equal authority and clearness that the worldly welfare of men is contingent on their faith and character. 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' Christ

might be a poor political economist, as some allege, but such is His order—only as you seek the moral can you realize adequately your personal gifts, the opulence of nature, the great and manifold possibilities of society. ‘All these things’—literature, art, science, eloquence, wealth, greatness—‘shall be added unto you.’ First, the kingdom of God within, then kingdoms of glory around; first, God’s righteousness, then the fulness of God’s gifts both for time and eternity. It is unnecessary to point out the vast significance of morals from this special point of view.

In the secular systems of morals now being pressed upon us, instead of righteousness coming before material prosperity, it is represented as coming out of it, after it, if it ever come at all. Mr. Crozier warmly argues that the preaching of duty is not the prime and efficient factor in progress, such preaching is of quite subordinate importance; civilization is best advanced by ameliorating the material and social conditions of men, and out of these improved conditions the higher morality will arise of itself. We must not set before the imagination of men pure ideals, urge upon them exhortations to duty and self-sacrifice, we must improve their condition and then will appear such morality as waits upon utility. ‘My strong conviction is, that all exhortations to duty and morality, and to elevation and expansion of mind, in the face of material and social conditions adverse to the growth of these virtues, are a waste of time and human energy.’¹ He pronounces it mere ‘religious sentimentalism and partiality’ to suppose moral conditions essential to

¹ *Civilization and Progress.*

material and social reformations and developments. His grand argument is, '*that in this world things make their own relations, that is to say, their own morality*, in spite of politicians or priests.' Chemical elements, we are reminded, make their own laws in spite of our wishes, the ways in which they will combine depend entirely on their own secret affinities and repulsions; so in the life of individuals and communities, things move in some such necessary and mechanical way, consequently all preaching is vain, '*things make their own relations, that is, their own morality.*'

Observe how the mechanical view of the universe prevails in this consideration of morality. The ways in which chemical elements combine are determined entirely by their own secret affinities and repulsions, and the moral character of men and nations is determined by similarly necessary causes; according to which view you might as well try to persuade chemical elements to form another substance than is in their nature to form, as attempt by the preaching of duty to change the moral qualities and characteristics of persons and societies. But when Mr. Crozier affirms, that in this world '*things make their own morality*'; we reply, men are not *things*, other considerations therefore come in, considerations of an altogether different order from the physical. We entirely deny that humanity is fashioned necessarily as the material universe is; men are governed by their convictions and ideals, and these do not necessarily grow out of their conditions of life; on the contrary, the thoughts of men are freely formed, their ideals deliberately chosen, such thoughts and ideals being often altogether at variance with the condi-

tions of life of those who cherish them. Things do not make their own morality, for things have no morality; men do make their own morality, and accordingly as they make it good or bad do they possess the earth or miss its treasure and blessedness.

In this country for many generations the order of Jesus Christ has been believed in and acted upon, the hearts and imaginations of men have been addressed, the conscience has been appealed to, exhortations to duty and self-sacrifice have sounded forth from ten thousand pulpits, and the result has not discredited Jesus Christ as a political economist. There has sprung forth the empire on which the sun does not set,—an empire with boundless wealth, a large and rational freedom, a splendid literature and noble art, a commerce whitening with its sails all seas, a philanthropy burning to bless the world, a population, despite all drawbacks, purer and happier than any population ever was before, a flag which has braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze. On the other hand, what is the condition of those countries where things have been left to make their own morality? In Egypt, Greece, Rome, things to a large extent, we must suppose, made their own morality, a morality signalized by the wreck of empire; in India, China, Turkey, things are left to make their own morality, speaking after the manner of our philosophers, a morality expressed in declining civilizations. The morality that makes itself unmakes men and kingdoms. Jesus Christ taught that a pure moral idealism was the mainspring of civilization and progress, and the history of the nations demonstrates the truth of His word.

How profoundly disastrous must the new theory prove, teaching that righteousness is not the source of civilization, but its shadow ! A more tremendous change in thought could not be imagined, and such a change would soon tell deplorably on public life and character. Mr. John Morley does not think highly of ‘the hack moralists of the pulpit’; and Mr. Crozier would sweep the pulpit away altogether as a philosophical impertinence, leaving morality to grow of itself. But does not the pulpit hold constantly before the public mind those glorious ideals of truth, justice, love, purity, hope, which are the inspiring and purifying influences of life, and if society lost sight of these ideals, would it not lose also its vital, uplifting, developing force ? Attend to your business, says Mr. Crozier ; give yourselves up to commerce, politics, pleasure, and leave morality to take care of itself. What would become of science if it were prosecuted only in this utilitarian spirit—in the spirit of gain and pleasure ? Professor Tyndall says : ‘Science must be cultivated for its own sake, for the pure love of truth, rather than for the applause or profit that it brings. . . . What was the motive that spurred on the men who have bequeathed to us the vast body of scientific knowledge ? What urged them to those battles and those victories over reticent nature, which have become the heritage of the human race ? It is never to be forgotten that not one of those great investigators, from Aristotle down to Stokes and Kirchhoff, had any practical end in view, according to the ordinary definition of the word “practical.” They did not propose to themselves money as an end, and knowledge as a means of obtaining it. For the most part, they nobly reversed this process, made knowledge their end, and such

money as they possessed the means of obtaining it.¹ And he continues to show very convincingly, that if theoretic science should give place to applied science, the result would prove fatal to scientific progress, and the practical consequences be most unfortunate. To be fruitful and progressive, science must not be cultivated in a utilitarian spirit, but from a love of truth, with the least reference to marketable value. What would become of art if it were prosecuted only in this utilitarian spirit—in the spirit of gain and pleasure? ‘The arts are doomed to ruin if a practical object be their main pursuit. . . . Let us confess and proclaim that utility is not the end of art.’² The obtrusion of the idea of utility even in its most refined form is injurious to artistic effect, and critics on every hand are bewailing how the introduction of commercialism into art has already blighted the domain of beauty.

The love of truth goes before insight into nature, and if it should cease, scientific progress would cease with it; the love of beauty goes before artistic creation, and if such love waxed cold, artistic triumphs would cease with it; and, in the whole of human life, if the love of righteousness should cease, and a coarse utilitarianism prevail, the rich fruits of material prosperity would wither from their stems. In science, in art, in character, we start with noble conceptions, metaphysical notions, a certain purity, loftiness, and largeness of soul which frees from sordid aims; and without a measure of this spirituality fine achievement is impossible. Exalted conduct is the science, art, and poetry of human life, and if the utilitarian temper is to be deprecated on the lower plane of intellectual life, that temper must work

¹ *On Light*, p. 214.

² Charles Clément.

still more mischievously in the higher range of moral character. To silence the preacher's appeal to the imagination, conscience, reason, and sentiment of the people, and dismiss the congregation to bill-sticking and huckstering on the plea that morality would by and by grow of itself, would be to dry up the sources of all national power and expansiveness, for on the prosperity of the soul depends all other prosperity. If society is ever persuaded that material success does not follow morality, but morality material success, a fatal blow will have been struck at practical righteousness.

7. The Church of God maintains the *infinite significance* of the moral law—another position disputed by modern infidelity.

When we say revelation sets forth the infinite significance of moral law, we mean that, as presented in revelation, the law finds its source, its reason, its sanction, its inspiration, its issue, outside the sphere of time and sense. The law is the expression of the will of the Most High; it is the definition of immutable righteousness; its authority is absolute, its issues everlasting. This was the reason why the Hebrew felt a profounder awe in the presence of the moral law than he did even in the contemplation of the starry heavens. The moral law was above the heavens; it reached beyond the visible sphere; its grandeur was the grandeur of eternity. Men are deeply moved only by what has in it an element of infinity: this element the Hebrew found in the law, and it awoke in his soul all the unspeakable delight, terror, hope, fear, which the voice of eternity can alone inspire.

But in modern ethical systems all is brought within the

narrow sphere of time and sense. There is a remarkable type of disease called agoraphobia, which manifests itself in the dread of a vast space; people suffering from this disease are seized with faintness any time their gaze is directed to some considerable open expanse. Many modern philosophers have suffered acutely in the mind from this malady, turning their face with terror from the infinite. So they restrict the moral law. According to their reading, moral laws originate in very vulgar instincts, all moral distinctions are expressed in terms of matter—the appeal is simply to prudence, the penalties of transgression, the recompenses of obedience, are bounded by mortality. The grandeur, authority, terror of the law are utterly lost.

How shall we feel the old abhorrence of evil, if evil is set in its true light by modern sceptical teachers? In revelation sin is terrible in its nature as antagonistic to the highest law of the universe, terrible as found in the laws and institutions of society, terrible in its workings in history, terrible in its consequences—eternal sin involving eternal misery. But sin is quite a mild malady as represented by secular moralists.

Take, first, their view of the *nature* of evil. Here let us go once more to the ingenious and eloquent author of *The History of Civilization and Progress*. It is exceedingly interesting, indeed exciting, to follow Mr. Crozier, and note how cleverly he gets rid of sin and the devil. The world, he says, is constructed on the principle of individuation; by which he means, that it is not lumped together as a whole, but is distributed into individual natures in the same way that the hand is divided into individual fingers; and the purpose of the world, whatever that purpose may

be, can only be worked out through the agency of these individual natures. ‘Such being the evident *ground-plan* of the world, . . . one sees at a glance that it is a necessity, inherent in the original design, that there should be some special provision for maintaining the individuality, and preventing things from being agglutinated with, or absorbed into, one another. And so, indeed, there is. We find in animals, horns, hoofs, claws, fangs, stings, organs of offence and defence of every variety, all serving as mere instruments or *means* by which this ground-scheme of individuation is maintained. Now a little reflection will show that corresponding to these horns, fangs, and stings in the lower animals, and to the appetites of fear, hunger, and self-preservation by which they are set in motion, is what we call the evil nature in man. Besides his coarse physical defences against enemies, man has the finer weapons of envy, pride, jealousy, revenge, and the like, which are merely these instruments of individuation and self-preservation carried up into the mind, and transmuted there into more subtle and flexible rapiers of attack or defence. Lesser men defend themselves from absorption by greater by means of envy, or hold their own against them by contradiction, combativeness, or pride. Vanity stimulates men to make the most of themselves, and helps them to keep up their individuality. Jealousy pricks them to hold their own against rivals; revenge to make good again on an enemy the injury he has done them; while sensual desire, working after its own natural laws, stimulates them to perpetuate this individuation by means of offspring having the like individuality, and so prevents things sinking back again into that flat and undiversified

desert of uniformity, out of which they had originally to struggle.'¹

What we thought evil propensities in men turn out nothing of the sort, they are simply instruments of that individuation which inheres in the very ground-plan of nature; they correspond to the horns, claws, stings, and teeth of animals, and are essential to the great ends of being, the general development of the world. We have been accustomed to reprobate jealousy, anger, intemperance, lust, as terrible passions—profoundly, essentially, entirely immoral; but it now appears that this is a mistake, such passions being gifts as essential to man as weapons of offence and defence are to the beasts of the field. What effect must such a view have on practical morals? Visiting the Zoological Gardens you notice a large variety of stings, claws, tusks, horns, teeth, and think none the worse of the caged creatures for possessing such instruments of individuation, although keeping a respectful distance with a view of preserving intact your own individuation; and if the so-called evil propensities of man simply answer to these animal weapons, they are really admirable endowments, and although some may use their horns, teeth, claws, stings, a bit too freely or a bit too vigorously, yet who can work themselves into any very terrible indignation over what is, after all, a lack of judgment and moderation in the use of gifts at once so beautiful and useful! There is no longer justification for the indignation and wrath with which we have been accustomed to regard the vices of mankind.

Or, consider the view of evil entertained by modern

¹ P. 114.

scepticism as that evil displays itself in *society*. Says Mr. Sinclair: ‘Immoralities mean ugly, that is inappropriate, customs and habits, and no more.’¹ Language of this kind reveals a startling change from the theological way of regarding evil. ‘Inappropriate.’ That implies a lack of judgment; an inappropriate thing is a thing out of place, out of season, and therefore to be regretted, but it is no matter to fill the souls of men with shame, indignation, terror, remorse. ‘Ugly.’ That implies a lack of taste; an ugly thing is a misshapen thing, good material perhaps, but lacking in form and grace of appearance, and, whilst undesirable, rather to be treated with ridicule than with scorn and sorrow. And in the same spirit another writer speaks of immorality as ‘a curtailment’ of character; that is, immorality is a lack of prudence and sense of proportion, the cutting off of some portion or other to the injury of the completeness or beauty of a thing.

But all such language ought to fill us with gravest concern, its coldness and mildness are signs that the infinite nature of evil is ceasing to be recognised, and that the mysterious dread of the thing is becoming extinct. An immorality is not an ugly habit—ugliness meaning simply disproportion, misrelation, unshapeliness, shocking the æsthetic sense—an immorality is the expression of a vile essence, a vicious principle, a weak, base, guilty soul; an immorality is not an inappropriate custom, a thing out of time and place, it is an act or custom for which there is no time or place, an outrage on the perfection of the universe and upon Him Who made it; an immorality is not the

¹ *Quest*, p. 7.

curtailment of character, the cutting off of some non-essential adjunct, it is a mortal wound, the killing of the soul in the eye. But the deeper view is being lost, sin is no longer exceedingly sinful, mildest epithets describe it, it is imprudence, tastelessness, curtailment.

Or, mark the view of modern scepticism concerning evil as evil appears in *history*. They assume evil to be a great necessity ; a variation, perhaps, using the word in an accommodated sense, a discord, essential to the fuller music, an alloy for the more effectual working of the pure gold of humanity. In the very eloquent and popular writer known as Vernon Lee occurs this truly terrible passage. After describing the colossal licentiousness of the Renaissance, she continues : 'This is no plea for the immorality of the Renaissance : evil is none the less evil for being inevitable and necessary ; but it is nevertheless well that we should understand its necessity. It certainly is a terrible admission, but one which must be made, that evil is part of the mechanism for producing good ; and had the arrangement of the universe been entrusted to us, benevolent and equitable people of an enlightened age, there would doubtless have been invented some system of evolution and progression differing from the one which includes such machinery as hurricanes and pestilences, carnage and misery, superstition and licence, Renaissance and Eighteenth Century. But unfortunately nature was organized in a less charitable and intelligent fashion ; and among other evils required for the final attainment of good, we find that of whole generations of men being condemned to moral uncertainty and error in order that other generations may enjoy knowledge

peacefully and guiltlessly. Let us remember this, and let us be more generous towards the men who were wicked that we might be enlightened. Above all, let us bear in mind, in judging the Renaissance, that the sacrifice which it represents could be useful only in so far as it was complete and irretrievable.¹ In another place she speaks of our ‘unjust turning away from the men and the times whose moral degradation paid the price of our moral dignity.’

In these truly dreadful passages it is distinctly taught that moral evil is part of the mechanism for producing good, the licence of the Renaissance being a section of that mechanism ; that whole generations of men are condemned to moral error and guilt in order that other generations may enjoy knowledge peacefully ; and that the wickedness and misery of the Renaissance could be useful to us only so far as it was complete and irretrievable. Evil is acknowledged a necessary thing working for the larger knowledge and enjoyment of mankind, and is no more avoidable, and no more censurable, than hurricanes and pestilences are. The Church of God teaches, on the contrary, that moral evil is not necessary and inevitable, that the path of progress never lies through disobedience, and that no good whatever comes to the individual or the race through sin—only through resisting it at all cost. The difference in the estimate of the obligation and worth of righteousness from these two points of view is immense, for as soon as moral evil is considered part of the system of nature, necessary and inevitable, the old hatred of it and resistance to it would be alike irrational and impossible.

¹ *Euphorion*, vol. i., p. 52.

In fact, already in the circles of disbelief there is no *hatred* of sin ; it is condemned certainly, but condemned calmly, serenely, dispassionately. We may ‘damn with faint praise,’ and excuse by light censure, and thus to-day in many forms wickedness is being apologized for and even glorified. In Italy in the fifteenth century, although crimes of the most horrible kind were abundant, men thought and wrote lightly of sin ; absorbed with pleasant pictures, bright suns, blue skies, rose gardens, dalliance and song, they felt the very least the heinousness of moral transgression. And in the sceptical school of our day we witness the same bias. No longer do men write bitterly of sin, with scorn, loathing, dread, with a sorrow and shame too deep for words, but since they have believed it superficial, measurable, terminable, necessary and inevitable, they write of it with a fine philosophical composure and moderation, or with a grim pleasantry, as we have just seen in Vernon Lee. It has been truly said, ‘We require of the virtuous that they should not only be incapable of vice, but abhorrent of it ;’ yet if sin is an error only, a necessary thing, or ‘bad form’ merely, how can it consistently be regarded with indignation and loathing ? Evil, and the consequences of evil, as represented in modern infidel literature, are no more like the representation of evil in revelation, than the lightning produced in theatres is like the red terror which blazes in the storm, utterly blasting whatever it strikes.

Where, also, we may ask, is the adequate impulse to virtue in this secular system ? There is really nothing in the system of relative morality to inspire the great convictions and sentiments necessary for the realization of virtue

in specially difficult circumstances. Mr. John Morley says. ‘The difference between virtue and vice, between wisdom and folly, is only phenomenal, yet there is difference enough.’¹ Difference enough for what? Such are the awful penalties of virtue that we often require overwhelming considerations to practise it; and if the difference between virtue and vice is only in appearance, there is no rational justification for martyrdom in virtue’s cause. If the difference between virtue and vice is only in appearance, our business is to keep up appearances—it is a question of shrewdness, and not blood-shedding. ‘There is difference enough.’ Difference enough for what? To justify men renouncing position, honour, wealth, life itself? Said Heinrich Heine: ‘Psychical pain is more easily borne than physical, and if I had my choice between a bad conscience and a bad tooth, I should choose the bad conscience.’ Heine was a downright sceptic; he believed, as Mr. John Morley believes, that the difference between good and evil is phenomenal, and therefore would choose a bad conscience rather than a bad tooth, as every sensible man would on such grounds, at least every man who had had a bad tooth before. On the ground of the infinite significance of the law, that it is high as heaven, deep as hell, lasting as eternity, that it appeals to the divinity within us, suggests the immortality which awaits us, that it is of essential unchangeable nobility and beauty, on such grounds men may ‘resist unto blood, striving against sin’; but if the difference between virtue and vice is only accidental and phenomenal, cool, logical men like Heine, whenever they

¹ *Miscellanies*, vol. i., p. 187.

can do it with impunity will not resist sin, no, not unto toothache.

The whole mood of mind created by scepticism is unfavourable to a lofty living morality. Only in the enthusiasm of the soul are loftiest things possible ; then only, seeing visions and dreaming dreams, can the poet sing, the orator kindle, the artist paint, the warrior triumph. The frigid, calculating mood creates no splendid works, speaks no immortal words, impels to no epoch-making conquests. It is specially true that only in the enthusiasm of the soul does holiness become possible—only when moved by thoughts which pass understanding, fired by mysterious hopes, melted by love deeper than words or tears, only whilst we have the sense of the infinite, is the highest ideal of character touched. And scepticism itself feels this, feels its need of large inspiration, of boundlessness of hope and fear, and therefore it ambiguously counsels : ‘ All is phenomenal, but believe it to be real ; we certainly die and perish, but put that thought far away, and live as if you were to live for ever ’ ; they feel the need of reality, of immortality ; without such convictions they see the highest deeds and virtues are impossible ; so that when reality and immortality have been dismissed as facts, they must be brought in again as fictions. This is a most impudent trick on the part of our unbelieving masters. They say again and again, Let us have the truth however painful, let us utterly renounce pleasing truths we cannot prove, whatever comes to pass let us refuse opium, and forthwith we are to be wheedled into swallowing this very big opium bolus—the world is an illusion, yet believe it real ; you are mortal, yet believe yourselves incorruptible and deathless. But

men will never consent to live on fictions they know to be fictions. When *Æneas* was wounded, and carried off the field by Venus—

‘ This done, the patron of the silver bow
A phantom rais’d, the same in shape and show
With great *Æneas*; such the form he bore,
And such in fight the radiant arms he wore.
Around the spectre bloody wars are wag’d,
And Greece and Troy with clashing shields engag’d.’

We are now called upon to believe the majestic shape of Christian faith has been mortally wounded, carried bleeding into the heavenly spaces; and, lest we should be utterly routed and trampled in the mire, a phantom is being raised the same in shape and show with our lost Genius. But we shall fight no bloody wars for virtue by the side of a recognised phantom; knowing the spectre to be a spectre, we shall deride such leadership, fling away the armour of righteousness, and eat and drink and rise up to play, leaving the apparitional prizes of virtue for fools. If all is phenomenal, all conventional, all mortal, men will think and act accordingly, and moral enthusiasm will cease with most other enthusiasms. We shall live with cool, tranquil, serene souls, eschewing sacrifices, making the best of the passing hour. ‘ Only a bad man can be cool,’ said Talleyrand; but when all men are cool, where will the good men be?

It is most important to remember that the controversy of the times does not concern faith merely, it equally involves morals; indeed the whole great controversy between Christianity and secularism shows most clearly that morals stand or fall with faith. Christianity maintains the reality

of moral law, whilst scepticism merges the moral in the intellectual, and accepts intellectual achievements as equivalents for moral conduct; Christianity assigns moral law a peerless supremacy, whilst scepticism exalts genius above goodness, paint above principle, music above manners, literature above life; Christianity maintains the universal obligation of the moral law, whilst scepticism narrows its range and contends for a certain neutral territory; Christianity acknowledges the reality of subjective morality only so far as it vindicates itself in actual life, whilst scepticism assumes a latent morality which excuses positive defects and disobedience; Christianity gives the law a distinct expression, so that the simplest may understand, whilst scepticism volatilizes it until its guiding lines are lost in cloudy poetry; Christianity affirms that through moral perfection only do we attain all other perfection, whilst scepticism avows that morality often stands in the way of perfection, nay, indeed, that the highest interests of the race are often best served through error and transgression; Christianity teaches the infinite significance of the moral law, whilst scepticism, by shutting off the eternal firmament with its master-lights and influences, deprives us of those stimulations without which man shakes off virtue as the unripe grape of the vine, and casts off his flower as the olive.

Says Dean Church: ‘Do we not need in these perilous times—of which the splendour, and power, and bewildered moral and religious thought remind us at moments of the closing days of the Roman Empire—do we not need to clear our confused fancies, to readjust our standard, to retemper our slack souls, to refresh our hopes, by setting

before us the health and directness and simplicity of the religious character shown in the New Testament?¹ There is much around us to hint the sad days of Roman decay, but nothing in our age more vividly recalls that painful spectacle than our bewildered moral and religious thought. There is a conspiracy against faith, a conspiracy against morals. We are being confused, old distinctions are being confounded, the mainspring of moral life is being removed, the loosest and strangest theories of life and conduct are in the lips of the people. As Octave Feuillet makes a representative character express the situation: 'A crime! nothing but a word! What is good, and what is evil? What is true, or what is false? In reality, you know very well that the code of human morality has, to-day, become nothing but a blank page, on which each one writes what he likes, according to his intellect and his temperament. Individual catechisms are the only ones left to us.' And not only are ethical theories being debased, our sceptical masters are busy bringing into contempt the great names which have hitherto been honoured by us for their exceptional religious and moral merit. Take this passage from Mr. Arnold: 'Notwithstanding the mighty results of the Pilgrim Fathers' voyage, they and their standard of perfection are rightly judged when we figure to ourselves Shakspeare or Virgil,—souls in whom sweetness and light, and all that in human nature is most humane, were eminent,—accompanying them on their voyage, and think what intolerable company Shakspeare and Virgil would have found them! In the same way let us judge the religious organizations which we see all

¹ *The Christian Character.*

around us.'¹ We have good reason to suppose that Shakespeare and Virgil would have found the most intolerable company in intellectual coxcombs and trifling pedants, not in splendid heroes like the Pilgrim Fathers ; and that these immortal poets would have reserved their satire for lavender dilettanteism, and not for the standard of perfection which inspired sublimest deeds ; but the purpose of the modern mocker is clear enough, insinuating skilfully that the liberty of paganism and the licence of the theatre are more admirable than the strictness of conscience which displayed itself in these immortal heroes of the Church.

How long will practical morality survive these attacks ? We have no hesitation in saying that the ethical theories of modern scepticism are essentially immoral, and already they begin to bear their appropriate fruit. The most dangerous enemies of moral purity are not the vulgar writers of pestilent tales and filthy poems, but the literary princes, who, with specious argument, enticing rhetoric, fine irony, seek to displace and dishonour the lofty, noble, moral philosophy of our fathers. These misguided, gifted spirits have long been doing most industriously their fatal work, and the crowd, with the profound faults of our nature, ever ready for self-will and indulgence, is beginning to reduce to practice the creed of licence. Speculative truth passes slowly into action when it demands painful sacrifices, but what is in the air to-day is in life to-morrow if it flatter the weakness of our nature.

¹ *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 27.

III.

THE influence of scepticism on character, as illustrated in SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVE MODERN SCEPTICS, farther justifies our misgivings for the future of morality if freethinking systems are to prevail.

Mr. Lecky writes: ‘One great cause of the success of Christianity was that it produced more heroic actions and formed more upright men than any other creed.’¹ Throughout its whole career has not Christianity owed the larger part of its success to the same causes? And we are bold to say the crowning demonstration and glory of Christianity are found in the upright men it has created, the heroic works of mercy it inspires. The Church of Christ has its weak places and members, and the spirit in which its defects are sometimes dwelt upon might lead to the conclusion that it comprehended little more than imbecilities and defects; but, however wood, hay, and stubble may unhappily intrude, that Church is still the City of God, whose foundations are all manner of precious stones, and whose inhabitants walk in white robes; He Whose eye can see every precious thing beholds within its gates millions of men and women living modestly, purely, disinterestedly, heroically, silently; behind its poverty, ignorance, absurdities, sins, He discerns a vast treasury of moral wealth and glory beyond all the glory of intellect and empire.

¹ *History of Morals*, vol. i., p. 394.

Can scepticism thus boast itself, thus justify itself ? The sceptics themselves feel they ought to demonstrate their superiority in character, conduct, service, and that they cannot hope to supplant the Christian faith until they have eclipsed the Christian character. ‘The theological religions of the past have evolved conscience ; the religious organization of the future must direct conscience as well as carry on its further evolution. It must gather up all the tender, generous, dutiful feelings of the deeply religious nature of man, and whilst allying these to truth, enlist them in the cause of progress. . . . There are no duties insignificant in the Religion of the Real ; its disciples are taught to bring religion to bear upon *every relation of life*, whether individual, domestic, or social ; and to permeate every sphere with religious emotion, whilst every action is guided by scientific thought.’ And the same writer adds in italics : ‘*The new form of religion must be superior to all theological forms in rousing and developing those emotions that are most powerful in prompting actions conducive to human welfare.*¹’ What success have they achieved in this direction hitherto ?

The author of *Natural Religion* having shown how wide and beautiful the religion of nature really is, how philosophical it is, what marvellous virtue resides in it, how superior it is to a supernatural faith, what grand fruits may be expected from it, proceeds to ask this very important question : ‘*But has all this any practical bearing ? To such (disciples of culture) the plain English intellect loves to apply a practical test. To see whether what they call their religion has any real existence, it scrutinizes their conduct, asks whether*

¹ *Scientific Meliorism*, p. 422.

and in what respects they lead a different life from others who do not profess to be religious, what religious practices they have, and especially what they sacrifice for their religion. Such are the criticisms which are, and always have been, applied to schemes of Natural Religion.¹ This writer believes the disciples of nature fully prepared to give a good answer to these questions touching their character and conduct. Miss Martineau speaks decidedly to the same effect. ‘Her belief now was that—The best state of mind was to be found, however it might be accounted for, in those who were called philosophical atheists. . . . I knew several of that class—some avowed, and some not ; and I had for several years felt that they were among my most honoured acquaintances and friends; and now I knew them more deeply and thoroughly, I must say that, for conscientiousness, sincerity, integrity, seriousness, effective intellect, and the true religious spirit, I knew nothing like them.’² John S. Mill was of the same opinion. He wishes sceptics would more generally and candidly avow their scepticism. Such an avowal would put an end, at once and for ever, to the vulgar prejudice, that what is called, very improperly, unbelief, is connected with any bad qualities either of mind or heart. The world would be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of its brightest ornaments—of those most distinguished even in popular estimation for wisdom and virtue—are complete sceptics in religion.³

Of late years it has been the fashion to make this avowal with much freedom and boldness ; we have been favoured with quite a considerable number of biographies and

¹ P. 115.

² *Harriet Martineau*, by Mrs. Miller, p. 152.
³ *Autobiography*, p. 45.

autobiographies of distinguished sceptics, and are now able to make ourselves acquainted with those merits which it is assumed have been hitherto concealed ; it is important also to observe that these records are supplied immediately by the sceptics themselves or by their ardent admirers. In the Pitti Palace, Florence, is a large saloon filled with portraits of distinguished painters of all nations, chiefly painted by themselves. It must be allowed a large proportion of these painters were very handsome men, and nearly always interesting in some particular, although some few might be deemed wanting in interest or beauty. Anyhow, none of the brilliant fraternity may complain, seeing by whom the effigies are furnished. The several characters fashioned by unbelief, at which we now propose to glance, have also been self-drawn, or drawn by friendly hands, so none may reasonably complain of the accuracy of the representation. Now when we inspect this gallery of sceptical portraiture does it in anywise meet our raised expectations, and show the favourable tendency of scepticism in the growth of character ? Do we find in these unbelievers the rarest attributes of soul—justice, goodness, mercy, purity, truth, magnanimity, sincerity, resignation, reverence, faithfulness ? Has infidelity produced new and higher types of character ? Has it sent forth workers for the race, prepared to make excelling sacrifices, inspired with a larger benevolence, a tenderer compassion ? We must confess extreme disappointment. The lives of infidel teachers are in saddest contrast to their pretentious philosophies and bland assumptions. We are the least wishful to deny the good qualities found in them, the useful work in some instances done by them, but they are deeply disappointing

nevertheless. Turner declined to have his portrait painted, on the ground that if people were made acquainted with his ugly face they would never believe he had painted such landscapes ; certainly, if scepticism wished us to respect its theories it should have withheld its biographies.

We must all feel what an ungracious task it is to dwell on the weaknesses of men—their infirmities of temper, their disgraceful passions, their positive failures of conduct, and the task is all the more painful when the men judged are of vast intellectual renown ; it seems indeed a kind of sacrilege. It is, however, imperative we should critically regard what they were. In these days we inquire into the morality of those who preach to us, who rule us, who write for us, nay, of those who simply entertain us, and we have an unquestionable right to inquire into the morality of moralists, into the character of the critics of character. ‘Thou, therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself ? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal ? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery ? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege ?’ Nothing in our day calls more loudly for faithful and courageous dealing than the moral aberrations of men of genius. Some of these ten-talented men boldly claim exceptional liberty of life. ‘Schopenhauer knew he had genius, that he was no ordinary man, and he acknowledged it with his habitual sincerity of speech. He weighed his duties towards the world in the balance with the weight and the intensity of his natural gifts ; and he came to the conclusion, that “a man gifted with genius, by merely being and working, sacrifices himself for all mankind; therefore he is free from the obligation of sacrific-

ing himself in particular to individuals. On this account, he may ignore many claims which others are bound to fulfil. He still suffers and achieves more than all the rest.”¹ And the glamour about such men we all find it hard to resist. We instinctively turn with disgust from the ragged sot in the gutter; no words are too contemptuous for the common harlot in the gin shop; we are sufficiently severe on the offenders at petty sessions; we are horrified with vulgar tipplers, wife-beaters, bigamists; but it is altogether another thing when the sinners are men and women of genius. Some of these were poets, whose sweet singing has thrilled us with delight; dramatists, who have set forth in moving spectacles the mysteries of our hearts; novelists, whose graphic or gorgeous pictures of life and manners have charmed our leisure hours; painters philosophers, orators, musicians, who have made more clear the path we walk, or strewn it with grateful flowers; and we have no courage to speak faithfully of the vices into which these great spirits fell; it is felt that only men of narrow soul will venture to hint the dark failings of these seers, bards, priests, and kings. But, however hard it may be to resist the transfiguration of the devil, it ought to be done, and must be done, if all society is not to suffer vitally. It is a good feature in our day that kings and aristocracies are no longer excused in immorality because of their purple and gold. Grote reminds us how in ancient Greece ‘the ethical judgment was not exact in scrutinizing the conduct of individuals pre-eminently endowed,’² and down to very recent times intellectual and political aristocracies

¹ *Life of Schopenhauer*, by Miss Zimmern, p. 80.

² *History*, vol. ii., p. 7.

have been excused the obligation of common morality. In these days, however, wealth and titles are no longer permitted to shield from criticism; and we now need to carry the same impartiality into the intellectual sphere, and boldly condemn the priests of reason who drag their robes through the mire, the intellectual kings who, through lawlessness, tarnish their crowns of glory. Fully allowing for the penalties of greatness, it will be remembered that genius has splendid compensations, and that society is fully justified in demanding obedience to the moral law in the most richly gifted of her members.

X | Perhaps the very highest name in the literature of culture is that of JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE. No name is more constantly quoted in modern literature, and none calls forth greater enthusiasm among the advocates of the new morality. 'The sight of such a man was to me a Gospel of Gospels,' says Carlyle, writing to John Sterling. Carlyle knew what the Gospel was, with its sublime central Figure, and therefore we turn with peculiar expectation to this Messiah of Messiahs. Goethe himself raises our expectation to the highest by his confession of noble sentiments. And, as just observed, this remarkable German is worshipped by most men of light and leading who seek to cultivate a morality independent of religion.

| Yet it is generally allowed that from a moral point of view Goethe is very unsatisfactory. With the character of his writings we are not here very specially concerned. Lewes considers it an absurd judgment to pronounce *Wilhelm Meister* immoral, and quotes what Wordsworth says of *Tam o' Shanter*, 'I pity him who cannot perceive

that in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect.' And yet Wordsworth, robust and tolerant as he was, when he read *Wilhelm Meister*, hurled the book across the room, disgusted with its sensuality. And much of Goethe's writing leaves a nasty taste in one's mouth, as Charlotte Bronte said of Balzac's novels. It may be very fine, yet it is only the poetry of the flesh.

The actual life of Goethe was seriously defective. When we read his grand words, 'Die and come to life! for, so long as this is not accomplished, thou art but a troubled guest upon an earth of gloom,' we are delighted, we feel that if not formally a Christian disciple, we have met with another Simon, a stranger from the country bearing the cross of Christ. But inquiring into the practical meaning of these words, as to how far Goethe's own life was pervaded by a sense of renunciation, we are disenchanted. We know what self-renunciation meant to our Lord; we know what it meant to the Apostles; we know what it meant to generations of Christian people; what did it mean to Goethe? Fine words, and nothing more. He saw into deep truths, but lacked the power to act out his perceptions and live in purity and disinterestedness. William Godwin, writing to his daughter, says: 'What we possess without intermission we inevitably hold light; it is a refinement in voluptuousness to submit to voluntary privations. I always thought St. Paul's rule, that we should die daily, an exquisite Epicurean maxim. The practice of it would give to life a double relish.'¹ Goethe must have regarded the doctrine of dying daily in some such light as this, as an exquisite Epicurean maxim, the observance of which gives to life a

¹ *William Godwin and his Friends*, vol. i., p. 256.

double relish, for his life, painfully indulgent and sensual, was at the utmost remove from the Christian ideal of renunciation. Henry Crabb Robinson once dining at Goethe's with Schlegel, relates that Goethe said to Schlegel, 'I am glad to hear that your brother means to translate the *Sakontala*. I shall rejoice to see that poem as it is, instead of as it is represented by the moral Englishman. And there was a sarcastic emphasis on the word moral.'¹ In his life also he abundantly showed his contempt for the thing moral.

His ten years' liaison with Frau von Stein, the wife of the Master of the Horse at the Court of Weimar, was disgraceful throughout. 'Since the middle of January, 1776, a deep love for Frau von Stein had been growing. One day calling on her, Goethe allowed himself to be carried away to such a passionate declaration of his love, that she felt it needful not to see him for several days. "The question keeps throbbing damnably in heart and head—Shall I go or stay?" he writes to her on the 29th. But he had made up his mind long ago: he could not endure to be without Charlotte's intimate trust; and so he must submit to all that seemed to her necessary to keep their relation one of the purest Platonic love. Charlotte von Stein had, by the power of her pure womanhood, by her mild gentleness, by her loving spirit, roused in him a passion the outbursts of which she rebuked with the firmness she owed to her duty and her honour, and punished by temporary withdrawal of her society. . . . Not until Thursday, the 22nd of February, did Frau von Stein, who had returned on Tuesday to Weimar, receive Goethe. In reading aloud a novel, how-

¹ *Diary*, vol. i., p. 188.

ever, he vividly conceived himself into the hero's position, and again broke forth in passionate self-utterance. She lovingly rebuked him for this extraordinary behaviour; for she earnestly wished to maintain the beautiful relation of intimate confidence, which was impossible if he forgot what was her obligation as wife and mother, and ventured to claim more than a sister's love from her. How far he was from self-mastery is seen in his declaration that she would not wean him from his improprieties.¹ Most readers will form their own opinion of 'the pure womanhood' of the Frau von Stein. Goethe remained in close intimacy with this woman for ten years, during which more than a thousand letters passed between them.

Some years after Goethe was in Italy, and we have this not altogether pleasing episode concerning the Gospel of Gospels: 'Probably to this month (January, 1788) falls the beginning of a connection which he formed with a beauty who was perhaps in the first instance his model. In this he but conformed to the pretty general custom of artists living in Rome. When Herder was in Rome, Goethe said playfully to Herder's wife that her husband would not be happy there until he fell in love. Had not Goethe himself enjoyed there the most splendid life, while this happiness in love lasted? The poetry of the Roman "triumvirs of love," Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius, and of Horace and Ovid, had probably long ere this been read by Goethe, who would seek by them to make old Rome live to him again. In the *Römische Elegien* this Roman love of Goethe's is a sort of glorified background. We know nothing of the personality of his mistress; she is said to have been of no

¹ Düntzer, *Life of Goethe*, vol. i., p. 324.

exceptional beauty ; she must, however, have had no small power of captivating, as she afterwards became the wife of a wealthy English settler in Rome, and ruled him skilfully.¹ With such gusto does the adoring biographer exhibit the special moral systems which at this time engaged the poet's thoughts, and the 'blossoming of sensual love,' which is very distantly related, we must believe, to any morality at all.

Immediately on his arrival in Italy, Goethe wrote to Charlotte von Stein : 'For the first time I feel how spoiled I am ; to have lived by thee, to have been loved by thee ten years—and now in a world that is strange to me !—I foretold it silently, and only the highest necessity had compelled me to this resolve. Let us have no other thought than to spend the close of life together.'² We have already seen how soon he found consolation with a Roman mistress, and on his return to Germany, instead of 'spending the close of life together' with the noble Charlotte, he proceeded to form another disgraceful alliance. He met and fell in love with a girl of low estate named Christiane Sophie Vulpius. 'The girl was a winsome little blonde, with beautiful blue eyes, a pretty nose, pouting lips, a round full face, and long fair hair. It is said that Goethe, at an earlier time, had seen Christiane in Bertuch's flower manufactory, where she was remarkable by her youthful freshness among the other women and girls there employed. Goethe probably established Christiane in his *Gartenhaus*. All we know is that on Sunday, July 13, 1788, not four weeks from the day of his return, he concluded his marriage of conscience with her. Goethe was completely captivated by her personal charms, her amiability, her Thüringian

¹ Dünzter, vol. ii., p. 46.

² Dünzter, vol. ii., p. 7.

naïveté, and by her evident happiness in having won the love of the great man whom she had looked on as so far above her. Probably the memory of his Roman amour also played through his joyous intoxication.¹ This girl bore him several children, and, taking to drink, became a perplexity to him in later years, when, for some reason or other, he married her. The treatment of this event by Mr. Lewes affords a fine specimen of the new ethical criticism : ‘ Why did he not marry her at once ? His dread of marriage has always been shown ; and to this abstract dread there must be added a great disparity of station. . . . But however he may have regarded it, Public Opinion has not forgiven this defiance of social laws. The world blamed him loudly ; even his admirers cannot think of the connection without pain. . . . But let us be just. While no one can refrain from deplored that Goethe, so eminently needing a pure domestic life, should not have found a wife whom he could avow, one who would in all senses have been a wife to him, the mistress of his house, the companion of his life ; on the other hand, no one who knows the whole circumstances can refrain from confessing that there was also a bright side to this dark episode. Having indicated the dark side, and especially its social effect, we have to consider what happiness it brought him at a time when he was most lonely, most unhappy. It gave him the joys of paternity, for which his heart yearned. It gave him a faithful and devoted affection. It gave him one to look after his domestic existence ; and it gave him a peace in that existence which hitherto he had sought in vain.’² It may be remembered that this escapade, so lightly blamed,

was not carried through in the hot blood of youth, but by one with forty years' experience. The Frau von Stein was very bitter against the 'low person' who, to use Mr. Lewes' words, 'had usurped her place,' and Goethe in vain begged her to 'see the case from a natural point of view.'

'On September 11, 1790, Goethe writes to Herder:— Everywhere there is roguery and vagabondism, and I shall certainly pass no really happy hour until I have supped with you and slept by my girl's side. If you continue to love me, if a few good folk continue friendly, if my girl is true, if my child lives, and my big stove gives good warmth, I have nothing essential left to desire.'¹ In which passage is expressed in brief the prevailing practical temper of this most superior person, the central principle of whose morality is renunciation. The biography of this very remarkable man presents the constant painful antithesis of splendid talents, exquisite poetry, profound philosophy and science, with illicit loves and vulgar living. You listen to a seer with deep views of law and life, to a poet opulent in fresh shining images, to an apparently religious man, for he has at command all the vocabulary sacred to religion, but when he begins to act you find throughout a life of self-will and self-indulgence: he proudly assumes to be a law unto himself, that is, to be lawless. Naturalists tell us they experience quite a shock in beholding the bird of paradise, glowing with strange beauty, greedily devouring cockroaches; the biography of Goethe presents a far more perplexing contrast, a soul dazzlingly bright with the hues of genius stooping to most base and vulgar gratifications.

We wish specially to call attention to the apology for

¹ Düntzer, vol. ii., p. 90.

Goethe tendered by the author of *Natural Religion*; it is exceedingly instructive as revealing the weakened moral sense of our day. ‘Goethe has always been an object of peculiar horror to the religious world, so tranquil was his indifference to all that they called Christianity. Not only Christianity but morality itself, as it is commonly understood, was not much favoured in his writings nor perhaps in his life.’¹ But, we ask, ought not Goethe to be an object of peculiar horror to the religious world? indeed, ought he not to be an object of horror to the whole self-respecting world? If not an object of horror because of his tranquil indifference to all we call Christianity, ought he not to be an object of horror for his selfishness, indulgence, and uncleanness? Let us hear our author’s farther defence of this Gospel of Gospels. ‘As to the attacks which were made upon Goethe by the pietists and the conventional moralists, it might be easy to defend him in general by denying that the religious mode of a given time and place is to be identified with Christianity, or that received proprieties are an infallible standard of morality. It would certainly be easy to show that he had not merely genius, but great and rare virtues, some of which—his indefatigable industry, his superiority to sordid or frivolous or envious thoughts—were made easy to him by his religion of nature. There remains the fact that the idea of duty and self-sacrifice appears not to be very sacred in his mind—rather, perhaps, to be irritating, embarrassing, odious to him.’² On this line of advocacy you might excuse robbery, lying, murder, seduction, incest, every type of criminal and every kind of sin; and pertinently we ask,

¹ P. 97.

² P. 98.

What will be the condition of public morality when this order of advocacy is generally accepted as valid? The author of *Natural Religion*, in common with the school to which he belongs, has many a covert sneer at 'conventional morality,' 'dull morality,' 'religious modes of a given time,' 'received proprieties,' 'mere morality,' 'morality as commonly understood,' and our curiosity is awakened as to what unconventional morality will be like, what lively morality will be like, what unreceived proprieties will be like, what morality as not commonly understood will be like, what the irreligious modes of a given time will be like. So long as we are confined to simple discussion it is impossible to be sure what the exact meaning of the new esoteric morality may be, but when concrete examples are adduced, uncertainty is at end, the characteristics of the new morality are defined beyond peril of misunderstanding. Our curiosity, then, touching the exact features of the new morality is satisfied in this apology for the German poet; in this egotistical, selfish, voluptuous man, to whom the idea of duty was irritating, the idea of chastity embarrassing, the idea of self-sacrifice odious, we find the new, lively, broad, unconventional, superlative morality, the morality of the future. Goethe anticipated the fine counsel of Mr. Matthew Arnold, and gave the preference to 'flexibility of thinking over earnestness of doing,' he 'made a stream of fresh thought play freely about our stock notions and habits;' and we see the result not satisfactory in important particulars.

But, argues his apologist, if Goethe did not produce 'the moral fruits we could have desired,' we must not 'be driven to accuse his religion.' Why, it is exactly what they are

pleased to call his ‘ religion’ that we must accuse. Goethe is brought into Court to prove how living and ennobling is the influence of a religion based on nature and art, and the witness displays the whiteness of the leper instead of the whiteness of the snow. His ‘ religion’ broke down utterly, and the world will continue to have little opinion of any religion that does not preserve from miserable selfishness and gross immorality. Says Carlyle most truly, ‘ What is the use of orthodoxy, if with every stroke of your hammer you are breaking all the Ten Commandments ? ’ Yes, indeed, what *is* the use of it ? But let Carlyle alter a word and put that question to his hero ‘ whose presence was a Gospel of Gospels ’ : ‘ What is the use of free-thought, if with every stroke of your hammer you are breaking all the Ten Commandments ? ’ This religion of culture broke down utterly, miserably, in its great apostle. Natural religion is fine in poetry, but a sorry thing to subdue the passions, to inspire purity, to chasten self-will, to strengthen to duty and sacrifice. It is excellently fitted for the theatre; substantially worthless in life. Goethe was intellectually one of the greatest of men, a man who penetrated into deepest truth ; but a profound thinker, arriving at the recognition of Christian truths without Christian grace, he was in life a pagan, stained by some of the worst vices of paganism.

The transition is natural from Goethe to THOMAS CARLYLE. No one ever insisted more on character than Carlyle, and so far his service to his generation was great. ‘ His test of progress—of the moral worth of his own or any other age—was the *men* that it produced.’ He saw

truly and felt strongly that the common weal of men and nations was contingent on moral character.

And yet Carlyle can badly bear the test of personal excellence. No sculptor, photographer, or painter, we are told, ever succeeded in securing a satisfactory portrait of Carlyle, and it is still more difficult to give a representation of the moral Carlyle that would prove satisfactory to critics generally ; yet we must think the voluminous biographical records of this great man enable us to recognise the main lineaments of his character. That the world generally was disappointed by these biographical revelations is notorious ; that it was disappointed with good reason is indisputable. Carlyle did not fail in the directions in which Goethe did ; but, free from certain carnal faults, there was in him an abounding wickedness. Hunter the great surgeon held that no body can at the same time be subject to two general diseases, and somewhat thus one type of wickedness excludes another—we shall rarely find in any one man all the range of the vices. The viciousness of Carlyle was very different from that of Goethe, but it was as real and as intense. There is a filthiness of the flesh and a filthiness of the spirit, and this latter more spiritual type of wickedness—pride, selfishness, contempt, uncharitableness, ingratitude, temper—was the condemnation of Carlyle.

His life was one long snarl at circumstances and people, the circumstances usually being auspicious and the people worthy. ‘He ought to have been contented ; but content was not in him.’ ‘He did not know what patience and self-denial meant.’ ‘The irritability which he could not or would not try to control followed him through the greater part of his life.’ These laments of his friendly biographer

are never ceasing. There is a characteristic letter written very early by Carlyle to his mother about a little dog which disturbed him: ‘Some two weeks ago I had a little adventure with an ugly *messan*, which a crazy, half-pay captain had thought proper to chain in his garden, about twenty yards from my window. The pug felt unhappy in its new situation, began repining very pitifully in its own way; at one time snarling, grinning, yelping, as if it cared not whether it were hanged then or to-morrow; at another, whining, howling, screaming, as if it meant to excite the compassion of the earth at large—this, at intervals, for the whole night. By five o’clock in the morning I would have given a guinea of gold for its hind legs firm in my right hand by the side of a stone wall. Next day the crazy captain removed it, being threatened by the street at large with prosecution if he did not. But on the evening of the second day, being tired of keeping the cur in his kitchen, he again let it out, and just as I was falling asleep, about one o’clock, the same musical, “most musical, most melancholy” serenade aroused me from my vague dreams. I listened about half an hour, then rose indignantly, put on my clothes, went out, and charged the watchman to put an instant stop to the accursed thing.’¹ If Carlyle had had eyes to see it, that dog was ‘a parable from nature,’ the spirit, character, and history of the Chelsea philosopher being graphically revealed in the snarling, grinning, whining, howling, screaming puppy—his destiny also was suggested by the incident, remembering how he dashed himself against a stone wall.

How terribly brutal were his judgments of men, even of

¹ *Life of Carlyle*, vol. i., p. 164.

the wisest and best! Speaking of Warburton, Leslie Stephen says: ‘Probably no man who has lived in recent times has ever told so many of his fellow-creatures that he held them to be unmitigated fools and liars.’ Warburton was courtesy itself compared with Carlyle, who originated a vast lurid vocabulary of abuse and blasphemy. His mouth was full of cursing: his arrogance, pride, and intellectual tyranny were simply indescribable. ‘What really offended and estranged Jeffrey was Carlyle’s extraordinary arrogance —a fault of which no one who knew Carlyle, or who has ever read his letters, can possibly acquit him. He was superior to the people that he came in contact with. He knew that he was, and he let it be seen in every sentence that he spoke or wrote.’¹ His ingratitude was extraordinary. He was unkind and exacting with all who were unfortunate enough to have dealings with him, and never failed to show impatience and ill-humour where he dared. His conduct to his wife for sustained selfishness and bitterness is, perhaps, without parallel. Froude tells us that his letters to his wife show ‘the affectionate tenderness which lay at the bottom of his nature,’ but what is the use of tenderness or anything else that always lies at the bottom, never revealing itself in actual life? His married life from beginning to end was a terrible study in black, he being the wretched artist altogether responsible for the picture. At Irving’s one day some one playfully called Carlyle ‘Antichrist’; spoken in jest, it contained a terrible truth. The spirit of Christ was patience, gentleness, forbearance, thankfulness, charity, goodwill to men; it is scarcely possible to think of any spirit

¹ *Life*, vol. ii., p. 394.

farther removed from these graces than was the spirit of Carlyle.

Lord Jeffrey said in his old days: ‘It is poor wine that grows sour with age,’ but Carlyle was always sour, and grew sourer with years. How unspeakably sad is this picture given by Froude of Carlyle’s closing days: ‘We were strolling along during the Russo-Turkish crisis, one afternoon, when we met a Foreign Office official, who was in the Cabinet secrets. Knowing me, he turned to walk with us, and I introduced him to Carlyle, saying who he was. Carlyle took the opportunity of delivering himself in the old eruptive style; the Geyser throwing up whole volumes of steam and stones. It was very fine, and was the last occasion on which I ever heard him break out in this way. Mr. —— wrote to me afterwards to tell me how much interested he had been, adding, however, that he was still in the dark as to whether it was his eyes or the Turk’s that had been damned at such a rate. I suppose I might have answered both.’¹ This spectacle Mr. Froude, with his eye for dramatic effect, pronounces ‘fine,’ but people undebauched by free-thinking will consider this old man, nearly choking himself with cursing and swearing, a very sad and humiliating spectacle. So Carlyle ended a life of intolerance, selfishness, bitterness, with a loveless, hopeless old age; his closing days being full of unspeakable remorse and wretchedness.

However much we may be dazzled with the unique genius of Carlyle, fascinated by his rich colours, touched by his pathos, illuminated by his flashes of insight revealing secret things, filled with love and reverence when he

¹ *Life in London*, vol. ii., p. 445.

vindicates the moral universe which lies behind and fashions the world of circumstance, it cannot be denied that his personal character is seriously defective, his private life pitifully mean and miserable. The contrast between the loftiness of his ideas in many instances, the grandeur of his pictures, the force of his high argument for truth, justice, and righteousness, and his own spirit and history, is as extreme and painful as anything found in the whole range of the confusions and contradictions of romance. Where must we look for the secret of failure in Carlyle's character? Not in his circumstances; he passed a period of comparative difficulty, but early attained distinction and independence. It is not to be sought in his health, for his health, fiercely as he at times complained of it, was essentially robust. Froude finds the secret of failure in his constitution. 'Nature had not bestowed on him the robust mental constitution which passes by the petty trials of life without heeding them, or the stubborn stoicism which endures in silence. Nature had made him weak, passionate, complaining, dyspeptic in body and sensitive in spirit, lonely, irritable, and morbid.'¹ But this is inadequate as an explanation of the bitter failure everywhere deplored.

Nothing in Carlyle's life is more noteworthy than his clear conception of his failings, and his steady belief in their curability. In fifty places he bewails his vanity, conceit, tyranny, passion, selfishness, and always with the conviction that these failings were conquerable if he only went the right way about it. '*All my griefs, I can better and better see, lie in good measure at my own door; were I right in my own heart, nothing else would be far wrong*

¹ *Life in London*, vol. ii., p. 458.

with me. This, as you well understand, is true of every mortal, and I advise all that hear me to believe it, and to lay it practically to their own case.'¹ Mr. Froude thinks the case settled when he says: 'Carlyle was Carlyle.' 'He could not fly from his shadow.' Carlyle would have been utterly ashamed of such false superficialities. He knew the fault in conduct was first a weakness or perversity in spirit, and from this central infirmity he believed men might be freed. 'Deliver me, ye Supreme Powers, from self-conceit; ah! do this, and then what else is your will.' Writing to his brother Alexander in 1834, he says: 'In the darkest weather I always predict better days. The world is God's world, and wide and fair. If they hamper us too far, we will try another side of it. Meanwhile I will tell you a fault you have to guard against, and is not that the truest friendship that I can show you? Every position of man has its temptation, its evil tendency. Now yours and mine I suspect to be this: a tendency to imperiousness, to indignant self-help, and if nowise theoretical, yet practical, forgetfulness and tyrannical contempt of other men. This is wrong; this is *tyranny*, I say; and we ought to guard against it. Be merciful; repress much indignation; too much of it will get vent after all. Alas! I feel well one cannot wholly help even this; but we ought unweariedly to endeavour.' In a letter to his mother, he writes: 'Sometimes of late I have bethought me of some of your old maxims about pride and vanity. I do see this same vanity to be the root of half the evil men are subject to in life. Examples of it stare me in the face every day. The pitiful passion under any of the thousand forms which it

¹ *Life of Carlyle*, vol. ii., p. 368.

assumes never fails to wither out the good and worthy parts of a man's character, and leave him poor and spiteful, an enemy to his own peace and that of all about him. There never was a wiser doctrine than that of Christian humility, considered as a corrective for the coarse, unruly selfishness of man's nature.' Again he bemoans himself: 'On the whole, art thou not among the *vainest* of living men? At bottom, among the very *vainest*? Oh! the sorry, mad ambitions that lurk in thee! God deliver me from vanity, from self-conceit, the first sin of this universe; and the last, for I think it will *never* leave us.' 'Shame befall me if I ought to complain, except it be of my own stupidity and pusillanimity.' Writing to his wife: 'These are fearful times, yet is there greatness in them. Now is the hour when he that feels himself a man should stand forth and prove himself such. Oh! could I but live in the light of that holy purpose, and keep it ever present before me, I were happy—too happy! Meanwhile, unfortunately, for these many months, and now as formerly, I am rather wicked. Alas! why should I dwell in the element of contempt and indignation, not rather in that of patience and love? I was reading in Luther's *Tischreden*, and absolutely felt ashamed. What have I suffered? What did he suffer? One should actually, as Irving advises, "pray to the Lord," did one but know how to do it. The *best* worship, however, is stout working. . . . But oh! my dear Jeannie, do help me to be a little softer, to be a little merciful to *all* men, even gigmen. Why should a man, though bilious, never so "nervous," impoverished, bug-bitten, and bedevilled, let Satan have dominion over him? Save me, save me, my Goody!

It is on this side that I am threatened; nevertheless we *will* prevail, I tell thee: by God's grace we will and shall.'¹

'He could not fly from his shadow,' says Froude; but if the black element in Carlyle's character is to be regarded as his shadow, he himself believed it was to be got rid of.

'Without your asking, I confess to you,
This is a human body which you see,
Whereby the sunshine on the ground is cleft.'

So spake Dante's guide when the tenants of Purgatorio were startled by Dante's shadow. Carlyle believed this life to be a Purgatorio in which character may become pure and transparent, and the spirit no longer cast a dark shadow on our path; his faith in this delightful possibility was not always equally strong and clear, yet it was one of the deepest beliefs of his soul. 'A soul of something heavenly I do seem to see in every human life, and in my own too, and that is truly and for ever of importance to me,' said he, and toward this beauteous light, inly descried, he ardently struggled. But that lovely ideal, seen so clearly in his youth, shining through all the mists and miseries of his manhood, he awoke in old age to find he had utterly missed. His life was one long losing struggle, and in the end he was sadly beaten—the baser part of him triumphed. In 1867 he wrote: 'Such a life as I now lead is painful and even disgraceful; the life of a vanquished slave, who at best, and that not always, is *silent* under his penalties and sores.'²

If ever the elements of a truly grand life were in any man they were in Carlyle; and that colossal ruin on the

¹ *Life*, vol. ii., p. 198.

² *Life in London*, vol. ii., p. 345.

pages of Froude, mingled mud and marble, splendour of gold and rotten wood, magnificence and meanness, strength and weakness, glory and shame, is the last and loudest testimony to the impotence of scepticism to fashion noble character. Carlyle believed in nature ; he loved her with a pure passion, and extolled her in strains worthy of her ; he wrote of the glory of the world as only the very greatest poets have done. He believed in Providence ; to him all history was a gigantic transparency through which shone the light of the Divine and Eternal. He believed in God ; the existence, omnipresence, and omnipotence of God being articles of his creed held with strongest conviction. The distinctive doctrines of Christianity were, however, rejected by him, and a metaphysical-poetical faith took the place of the positive, historical, living faith of his fathers. Instead of God in Christ, with all its implied doctrines of Redemption, Grace, Prayer, Sanctification, Hope, he stood afar off, worshipping the ‘Eternal Unnameable,’ the ‘Fatalities,’ the ‘dumb Immensities,’ the ‘Infinities,’ the ‘Silences,’ all the time sinking deeper into the mire, and uttering cries of deeper despair. A bald Deism failed in the experience of Carlyle, as it has ever failed, leaving the great man a helpless victim to the lusts which war against the soul.

Whilst Carlyle was filling earth with his roarings, and generally wailing his monstrous melody to the moon, thousands and tens of thousands of poor men and women, strong in the faith of Christ, were bearing a real martyrdom in noble silence ; his the greatness of genius, theirs the greatness of the soul. The strengthening, comforting, chastening, transforming faith of Christ was all that was needed

to chasten, to soften, to discipline the powerful and rich personality of Carlyle, making him as sublime in character as he was in genius. ‘It is the nature of the beast,’ said Carlyle, in explanation and exculpation of his persistent faults ; it *was* the nature of the ‘beast’ ; but the glory of Christianity is, it takes away the heart of the beast, and creates a new heart, full of reason, righteousness, and love Froude remarks how much Carlyle’s writings resemble St. Paul’s ; the resemblance of the philosopher’s writings to those of the Apostle would not perhaps strike many, but the identity of their experience up to a given point is very striking. St. Paul’s ‘O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ may be heard distinctly and piteously in a thousand pages of Carlyle’s history. Would to God the modern struggler had gone all the way with the Apostle and triumphed : ‘I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord !’ then out of those mighty faults should have been moulded one of the largest, loveliest shapes in the congregation of the just.

Another great teacher of our times whose life furnishes most important illustration of the failure of scepticism in the realm of character is GEORGE ELIOT.

This lady came before our generation as a great moral teacher, proclaiming a morality far loftier than that of Jesus Christ. Said Goethe, clear-eyed enough and deepest-thoughted, whatever his practical lapses might be, ‘Let mental culture go on advancing, let science go on gaining in depth and breadth, and the human intellect expand as it may, it will never go beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity as it shines forth in the

Gospels.¹ George Eliot belonged to the school that regarded with contempt this moral culture extolled by Goethe. She found the ethical core of Christianity coarse and selfish. ‘On one occasion, at Mr. Bray’s house at Rosehill, roused by a remark of his on the beneficial influence exercised by evangelical beliefs on the moral feelings, she said energetically, “I say it now, and I say it once for all, that I am influenced in my conduct at the present time by far higher considerations, and by a nobler idea of duty, than I ever was while I held the evangelical belief.”² And by virtue of her dramatic talent she ultimately became the representative teacher in this country of the altruistic morality of Positivism.

What was the practical effect of these ‘higher considerations,’ this superfine morality? We claim the right to try our authoress by a very high standard. In one of her books she lays down this canon in the criticism of reputations: ‘In the times of national mixture, when modern Europe was, as one may say, a-brewing, it was open to a man who did not like to be judged by the Roman law, to choose which of certain other codes he would be tried by. So, in our own times, they who openly adopt a higher rule than their neighbours, do thereby make act of choice as to the laws and precedents by which they shall be approved or condemned, and thus it may happen that we see a man morally pilloried for a very customary deed, and yet having no right to complain, inasmuch as in his foregoing deliberative course of life he had referred himself to the tribunal of those higher conceptions

¹ *Conversations with Eckermann.*

² *Life*, vol. i., p. 148. Tauchnitz ed.

before which such a deed is without question condemnable.¹ Rejecting Christianity, George Eliot appealed to some higher conceptions of character and duty, and nobody has any right to complain if we try her by the lofty standard she herself held up. There is no need, however, to test her by any extraordinarily stern standard, she failed miserably enough in regard to ordinary morality. And George Eliot has herself freed us from any delicacy in speaking of her faults. In her most mean essay on Dr. Young, in which, whilst she herself was living in free-love with George H. Lewes, she insinuates mockingly that Young lived on too familiar terms with his housekeeper, she writes thus of the evangelical poet: 'And if, in the present view of Young, we seem to be more intent on laying bare unfavourable facts than on shrouding them in charitable speeches, it is not because we have any irreverential pleasure in turning men's characters the seamy side without, but because we see no great advantage in considering a man as he was *not*.'² We may now in the same spirit be permitted to say, if we seem to be more intent on laying bare unfavourable facts than on shrouding them in charitable speeches, it is not because we have any irreverential pleasure in turning women's characters the seamy side without, but because we see no great advantage in considering a woman as she was not.

If there is any law a woman ought to sustain with special sacred jealousy it is the marriage law. The sacredness and inviolability of that law is a position of the very first importance, and to weaken the force of that law in public estimation is the very last thing a truly noble woman

¹ *Leaves from a Notebook*, p. 376.

² *Essays*, p. 36.

would do. With that institution is bound up the honour and happiness of both sexes; with the integrity and purity of home life is bound up the general well-being of the race itself. It is quite characteristic of Mr. John Morley to tell us: 'There is probably no uglier growth of time than that mean and poor form of domesticity which has always been too apt to fascinate the English imagination,' and to deplore 'domestic sentimentality of a greasy kind,' but we believe the domesticity which fascinates the English imagination to be one of the grandest things we can know; in Germany, in America, in our own country, the austere purity of the home life has found its outcome in supreme imperial greatness. It was with this all-important institution that George Eliot trifled, and by consenting to live with a man whose wife was still alive, she lent her vast influence to the lowering in the national mind of the sense of marital obligation, which involves the dignity and happiness of millions. And she had the very least excuse for the licence. She had arrived at years of discretion, and could not plead ignorance and inexperience; she yielded to no temptation and pressure of poverty, but after all the Comtist talk of disinterestedness, of living for others, of the essence of morality being the subjugation of self in obedience to social needs, the two chosen representatives of the superior morality set aside truth for a lie, preferred their own will and pleasure to purity and justice, exalted their lawless fancy above a palpable public duty, and lived together in adultery. They took Mr. Matthew Arnold's advice and 'gave the preference of flexibility of thinking to earnestness of doing.' They made a stream of fresh thought play freely about stock notions

and habits'; and few people indeed will feel admiration at the result.

Her biographer, Mr. Cross, ventures on this defence of the ruinous step: 'In forming a judgment on so momentous a question as her union with Mr. George Henry Lewes, it is, above all things, necessary to understand what was actually undertaken—what was actually achieved—and, in my opinion, this can best be arrived at, not from any outside statements or arguments, but by consideration of the whole tenor of the life which follows, in the development of which Mr. Lewes' true character, as well as George Eliot's, will unfold itself. No words that any one else can write, no arguments any one else can use, will, I think, be so impressive as the life itself.'¹ We take entire exception to such method of justification. Any supposed intellectual advantage arising out of this cohabitation to either Mr. Lewes or Miss Evans, any service Miss Evans might render his children, any happiness springing from the misrelation, however ostentatiously thrust into the foreground, fails to give the least sanction to the illegal union; we might indeed just as well argue that a gross embezzlement should be condoned on the ground that the proceeds made the rogue very happy ever after, enabled him to bring up his children respectably, and do many acts of philanthropy. The result has absolutely nothing to do with the act. George Eliot herself had abundance of sophistical language ready to veil the grossness of the act of living with another woman's husband, but it was the disgrace of her life, and the condemnation of her philosophy. Readers of *Jane Eyre* will remember how Rochester had a wife in the background,

¹ *Life*, vol. i., p. 291.

and how on the marriage-eve she penetrated Jane Eyre's chamber, and left the torn bridal veil on the floor. George Eliot achieved a proud intellectual position, wrote powerful stories, surrounded herself by sweet domesticities, lived in popularity, plenty, and pleasure, but the wronged wife in the background always makes herself felt, the torn veil is on the floor no matter what gaieties are going on, and one is conscious of a sickening sensation all through the history, although the surprises of the real concur with the splendours of the ideal to divert attention from the ugly fact.

Insincerity, cant, and hypocrisy are detestable features of character, and it would be difficult to find these disfigurements more offensively displayed than they are in George Eliot. 'My gall rises at the rich brewers in Parliament and out of it, who plant those poison shops for the sake of their million-making trade, while probably their families are figuring somewhere as refined philanthropists or devout evangelicals and ritualists.' The animus is obviously rather against the piety than the tipple, and the rich brewers might conclusively urge their fellow-sinner to take the beam out of her own eye before treating the mote in theirs or the beam either. On another occasion, she writes: 'As to the Byron subject, nothing can outweigh to my mind the heavy social injury of familiarizing young minds with the desecration of family ties. The discussion of the subject in newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets is simply odious to me, and I think it a pestilence likely to leave very ugly marks. One trembles to think how easily that moral wealth may be lost, which it has been the work of ages to produce, in the refinement and differencing of the

affectionate relations.' Who trifled with that moral wealth more than she did? How amazing such a passage reads in the light of her own history! Our purist calls George Sand's teaching nonsensical and wicked: 'What sort of "culture of the intellect" is that which flatters egoism with the possibility that a complex and refined human society can continue, wherein relations have no sacredness beyond the inclination of changing moods?' An impudent speech in the lips of the very woman who, at the beck of caprice, has violated one of the most sacred relations of the said refined society! She scorns Young for writing begging letters to 'the king's mistress'; but a king's mistress is as good as a philosopher's mistress. Our Lord warned us against casting stones at sinners, but when the sinner herself takes to stoning, a protest is not unreasonable. There is something unspeakably odious in a woman living in violation of one of the first and most solemn laws of society, and yet assuming to teach that society, as from a supernal height, a new code of morals not only whiter than snow, but whiter than that.

George Eliot's life demonstrates afresh the moral impotence of mere philosophy. She possessed large knowledge, a powerful reasoning faculty, an imperial imagination, a philosophic temper, and a passion for science, yet all was unavailing when the moment of temptation came. George Lewes' life is another case in point. A disciple of Comte, and an enthusiastic believer in the philosophy of absolute disinterestedness, he was yet ready, for his own selfish pleasure, to drag a pure woman's name through the dirt, and violate a social canon of transcendent and universally-acknowledged preciousness. The pretentious philosophy

was glaringly discredited in both its representatives ; when the crisis came, it slipped them into the mire. Can any one for a moment believe George Eliot would have deliberately chosen such a position of dishonour if she had retained Christian faith and hope ? That faith is every day inspiring poor girls and women sorely tried by temptation, lifting them above sin, giving them glorious victory, although they are urged by terrible need, allured by dazzling bribes, and it would have proved the complete salvation of George Eliot had she not renounced its power. The grace of Christ would have rendered a mésalliance unthinkable ; the rose of genius would have glowed all the brighter against the lily of purity ; and the noble womanhood have been more to herself and her generation than all poetries and philosophies ; but in free-thinking circles George Eliot's views were confused, her foolish heart darkened, her self-will fostered, her fine tone lost, her wholesomeness and strength of soul deteriorated, and the scandal of her life became possible, became actual. The world will persist in judging theories by their effects on the character and action of such as hold them strongly and sincerely ; and whatever we may think of philosophy as an intellectual pastime, we shall think little of it as a serious force whilst it leaves its disciples chargeable with gross immoralities.

George Eliot's life discovers afresh the moral impotence of culture. Immediately after beginning their illicit intercourse, Mr. Lewes together with George Eliot visited the Continent for an art tour of some eight months; their journal being a record of theatre-going, opera-going—sculptors, poets, actors, vocalists, musicians, figure on every page. Throughout the rest of her life the great novelist was

passionately fond of pictures, music, song, and dramatic representation. The Crucifixion, artistically treated, had for her a special fascination. ‘The great treat at Antwerp was the sight of the Descent from the Cross, and its pendant, the Elevation of the Cross. In the latter, the face of Jesus is sublime in its expression of agony and trust in the Divine. It is certainly the finest conception of the suffering Christ I have ever seen. The rest of the picture gave me no pleasure. But in the Descent from the Cross, colour, form, and expression alike impressed me with the sense of grandeur and beauty. We went to the museum and saw Rubens’ Crucifixion, even more beautiful to me than the Descent from the Cross.’¹ She was equally fond of Calvary, rendered musically. ‘After that we went to hear the “Messiah” at Her Majesty’s. We felt a considerable *minus* from the absence of the organ, contrary to advertisement; nevertheless, it was good to be there. What pitiable people those are who feel no poetry in Christianity! Surely the acme of poetry hitherto is the conception of the suffering Messiah, and the final triumph, “He shall reign for ever and for ever.” The Prometheus is a very imperfect foreshadowing of that symbol wrought out in the long history of the Jewish and Christian ages.’² She had also an eye for ‘Jesus Christ and Him crucified’ in dramatic representation. To a correspondent she writes: ‘I thought of you—to mention one occasion amongst many—when we had the good fortune, at Antwerp, to see a placard announcing that the company from the Ober-Ammergau, Bavaria, would represent, that Sunday evening, the *Lebensgeschichte* of our Saviour Christ, at the Théâtre

¹ *Life*, vol. ii., p. 8.

² *Life*, vol. iii., p. 139.

des Variétés. I remembered that you had seen the representation, with deep interest—and these actors are doubtless the successors of those you saw. Of course we went to the theatre. And the Christ was, without exaggeration, beautiful. All the rest was inferior, and might even have had a painful approach to the ludicrous; but both the person and the action of the Jesus were fine enough to overpower all meaner impressions. Mr. Lewes, who, you know, is keenly alive to everything "stagey" in physiognomy and gesture, felt what I am saying quite as much as I did, and was much moved.¹

We need no farther evidence of the worthlessness of culture from a moral point of view. What was the supreme lesson of that Cross? Was it not the reality, the supremacy, the inviolability, of righteousness? that sin, which is the transgression of the law, is the most terrible evil in the universe? that righteousness must be maintained even at the expense of the costliest sacrifice we may know? But George Eliot stripped the Cross of its vast moral significance, and considered the chief object of the Crucifixion a theme for the fine arts! St. Paul speaks of 'making the Cross of Christ of none effect,' but it may be doubted whether he ever dreamed of a stultification of the Cross after the style of the museum at Antwerp, Her Majesty's Theatre in London, or the Theatre of Varieties at Antwerp. The profound moral significance of our Lord's death, of which the New Testament never loses sight for a moment, is entirely ignored by this aesthetic couple; it is simply a question of colour, harmony, and histrionic cleverness. 'What pitiable people those are who feel no poetry in

¹ *Life*, vol. iii., p. 217.

Christianity!' Yes ; and what pitiable people those are who feel that Christianity is nothing but poetry ! So this superfine pair, guilty of one of the foulest transgressions of the Decalogue, pass along galleries, museums, theatres, carnivals, in light-hearted humour, feeling no condemnation: imagination alive, conscience dead. *Æstheticism* is without moral seriousness and force—it neither convinces men of sin nor strengthens them against it; and we may not easily guess the utter dereliction of morals when adulterers and adulteresses have so debased the moral sense as to convert the tremendous events of our Lord's Passion into æsthetic amusement, making a pic-nic on Mount Calvary and a May-pole of the Cross.

Another thing we owe scepticism, then, is the spoiling of one of the most richly-gifted women the world has known. If we are not entirely mistaken, her scepticism largely spoiled her art; a living faith would have inspired the force, fire, fulness, the poetry and passion, which even a critic like Mr. F. Harrison finds lacking in her works, and which gives her a place with second-rate writers only; it certainly spoiled her life. Every reader must feel the sadness of George Eliot's biography; how the dense shadow of a great mistake is over it all; and how glorious the life might have been had not infidelity betrayed and wrecked it.

In these three lives from the sceptical school, Goethe, Carlyle, and George Eliot, morality was considered chiefly from the poetic side, the result on character not being at all such as we desire. The intellectual endowments of these typical personages were such as to elicit our wonder

and gratitude; their moral features such as to inspire disappointment and disgust. Goethe lived a life of scientific selfishness, that is, he reduced selfish indulgence to a science, and was a master in it; those who idolize Carlyle as an author, find it difficult to forgive Carlyle the man; and as to George Eliot, her practical morality was as low as her philosophy was high, and after reading her memoirs most carefully we must say we know few biographies which reveal less personal sacrifice for the world's good. We may go to these writers for mental excitement and delight; the world will hardly go to them for patterns of noble lives. 'Culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater!—the passion for making them *prevail*. It is not satisfied till we *all* come to a perfect man.'¹ The greatest passion of culture, then, is sadly unavailing even in its elect spirits, and we need be little sanguine of its sanctifying the common multitude. To *prevail* is the one thing culture cannot do. Says Schopenhauer: 'Wisdom is not merely theoretical, but also practical perfection The wisdom that imbues a man with mere theory not developed into practice, resembles the double rose, which pleases by its colour and fragrance, but drops, leaving no fruit.' The whole infidel brotherhood thus resembles the double rose, showy enough in theory, but bearing little gracious fruit.

The distinguished writers already reviewed represented morality on its poetic side, their failure in point of personal character being clear and undeniable; let us, therefore, turn to another group of illustrious unbelievers who represent ethics on the positive utilitarian side, and

¹ *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 43.

enquire if their personal character is in anywise more satisfactory.

WILLIAM GODWIN, and the circle of which he was the centre, are most interesting studies in connection with our particular theme. Godwin commenced public life as a Dissenting minister, but soon drifted from the faith, and ultimately settled into avowed atheism. He first became famous by his work entitled *Political Justice*, and throughout a long life upheld before the nation, theoretically, a high morality. He dwells copiously and eloquently on justice, humanity, courage, independence, freedom, benignity, rectitude, truth, and philanthropy. He believed in the 'perfectibility' of the individual and of society, and that morality would be stronger for separation from religious faith. The biography of such a man we may reasonably expect to furnish a fine character and sunny memories. Excellent elements were found in Godwin's natural constitution, and he ought to have been a very noble figure. His biography is, however, a great disappointment.

One part of Godwin's larger moral view was to discredit marriage; he wished to return to 'a more natural system.' In his view, marriage is law only and the worst of all laws, and its abolition would be attended with no evils, only with good to both sexes. Let us see what came out of this noble love, this refined friendship, these marriages of conscience, this purified and enlarged sociality. According to Mr. Kegan Paul, Godwin was a conscientious, 'passionless' philosopher, and it is very disappointing to find his course so much less honourable and happy than we fondly hoped.

Mary Woolstonecraft, a woman of considerable ability and energy, commenced life with evangelical views, but eventually adopted extreme sceptical opinions. In the sceptical mood she wrote her famous book entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, maintaining among other loose positions that mutual affection was marriage, and that the marriage tie should not bind after the death of love, if love should die. Acting out her theory, she cohabited in Paris with an American gentleman named Imlay, and in 1794 gave birth to a girl who received the name of Fanny. Mr. Imlay soon deserted Miss Woolstonecraft, and, overwhelmed with grief, the poor lady returned with her child to England. Here she became acquainted with Godwin, and they were married. They both violated their theory in consenting to such legality, but the bitter experience with Mr. Imlay had, no doubt, left Mary Woolstonecraft a sadder and a wiser woman. The marriage took place at Old St. Pancras Church, on March 29th, 1797, and on August 30th, 1797, she bore a child to the passionless philosopher. This child, named Mary, became afterwards the wife of Shelley the poet. The debasing influence of scepticism on the female character is seen most painfully in the case of Mary Woolstonecraft; it destroyed in her all that fine, pure feeling which is the glory of the sex. On the morning of the day on which she was confined, she wrote a note to Godwin: 'I have no doubt of seeing the animal to-day.' She did see 'the animal,' and its birth killed her.

A few years later Godwin married a widow named Mrs. Clairmont who had two children. Mrs. Clairmont was a

woman of spirit, and the married life with Godwin was full of unloveliness and wretchedness.

On May 18th, 1814, the poet Shelley, who heartily sympathized with Godwin's scepticism, and who was indeed his enthusiastic disciple, deserted his young wife and children in the most shameful and heartless fashion. Shelley began immediately to cultivate the society of Mary Godwin, and in the strange irony of things the pair developed their illicit love on Mary Woolstonecraft's grave in Old St. Pancras Churchyard. On July 28th, 1814, two months after deserting his wife, Shelley eloped with Mary Godwin to France, and henceforth they lived together. The fugitive pair were accompanied by Miss Clairmont, the daughter of Mrs. Godwin by her former husband, and this lady became Byron's mistress. On this painful event Godwin's admiring biographer, Mr. Kegan Paul, remarks: 'We cannot pretend to regret that two such natures as the Shelleys' should each have found their complement in the other.'¹ With such glosses our new sceptical biographers pass over the damning faults of their heroes!

On October 11th, 1816, Fanny Godwin, the daughter of Gilbert Imlay and Mary Woolstonecraft, ashamed of her origin, and sick of her bitter life in the atheistic home, committed suicide by poisoning herself in an inn at Swansea. The remains of a bottle of laudanum were found on the table, and a note to this effect: 'I have long determined that the best thing I could do was to put an end to the existence of a being whose birth was unfortunate, and whose life has only been a series of pain to those

¹ *William Godwin*, by C. Kegan Paul, vol. ii., p. 240.

persons who have hurt their health in endeavouring to promote her welfare. Perhaps to hear of my death will give you pain, but you will soon have the blessing of forgetting that such a creature ever existed.'

One month later, Saturday, November 9th, 1816, Harriet Shelley, Shelley's broken-hearted wife, ended the life the atheistic poet had blasted by drowning herself in the Serpentine.

After Shelley's discarded wife had drowned herself, the poet married Mary Godwin with whom he had been hitherto living in adultery; and the letter in which William Godwin in his vanity announces the event to his brother gives a fine insight into a sceptical-philosophical moralist. 'Dear Brother,—I have not written to you for a great while, but now I have a piece of news to tell you that will give you pleasure, I will not refuse myself the satisfaction of being the vehicle of that pleasure. I do not know whether you recollect the miscellaneous way in which my family is composed, but at least you perhaps remember that I have but two children of my own; a daughter by my late wife and a son by my present. Were it not that you have a family of your own, and can see by them how little shrubs grow up into tall trees, you would hardly imagine that my boy, born the other day, is now fourteen, and that my daughter is between nineteen and twenty. The piece of news I have to tell, however, is that I went to church with this tall girl some little time ago to be married. Her husband is the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley, of Field Place, in the county of Sussex, Baronet. So that according to the vulgar ideas of the world, she is well married, and I have great hopes the young

man will make her a good husband. You will wonder, I daresay, how a girl without a penny of fortune should meet with so good a match. But such are the ups and downs of this world. For my part I care but little, comparatively, about wealth, so that it should be her destiny in life to be respectable, virtuous, and contented.' The snobbery, vanity, falsehood, and hypocrisy of this epistle are simply delicious. We see by this communication what all Godwin's grand talk about sincerity, truthfulness, and honour really amounted to in practical life.

It is hardly possible to imagine a more terrible story of selfishness, lust, shame, and misery, than that of the Godwin-Shelley set. Godwin himself was a vain egotistical man, fond of flattery, borrowing money, getting up testimonials to himself, quarrelsome, and a more repulsive, harrowing domestic history than his was never written. Our cheerful atheists promise pure and delightful friendships, serene and paradisal homes when we have once got rid of religious superstitions, but let men turn from prophecy to history, let them read *Godwin and His Friends*, by C. Kegan Paul, and supplement and correct this work by Mr. Jeaffreson's painstaking volumes on the *Real Shelley*, and they will see as in a glass the awfully immoral influences of scepticism, the utter wretchedness which such scepticism breeds. Godwin, Mary Woolstonecraft, Shelley, Byron, and their coterie generally, took Mr. Matthew Arnold's view of life, giving 'the preference to flexibility of thinking over earnestness of doing, they made a stream of fresh thought play freely about our stock notions and habits,' and the outcome was that some of the greatest names in literature are blackened by foul stains for which is no purgation, whilst

their lives were rendered as profoundly shameful as their talents were supremely brilliant.

Let it be remembered, Godwin was a religious man in the sense in which culture is religious—he lived by admiration of nature. He thus explains himself to one of his correspondents: ‘You seem not to know what I mean by religion. You ask whether I do not mean benevolence. No; I should be ashamed of such a juggle of words. The religious man, I apprehend, is, as Tom Warton phrases it in the title of one of his poems, “An enthusiastic, or a lover of nature.” I am an adorer of nature. I should pine to death if I did not live in the midst of so majestic a structure as I behold on every side. I am never weary of admiring and reverencing it. All that I see, the earth, the sea, the rivers, the trees, the clouds, animals, and, most of all, man, fills me with love and astonishment. My soul is full to bursting with the mystery of all this, and I love it the better for its mysteriousness. It is too wonderful for me; it is past finding out: but it is beyond expression delicious. This is what I call religion, and if it is the religion you loathe, you are not the man I took you for.’¹ Here the religion of nature, the religion of admiration, is most clearly apprehended and vehemently felt, and yet the poor character and painful history of Godwin proves again how little force and value such a religion has in actual life. Culture breaks down at life. The religion of nature, full of promise, is meagre in result. The worshippers of heaven and earth cannot get into their mind the grandeur of the firmament, into their heart the purity of the stars,

¹ *William Godwin*, vol. ii., p. 264.

into their temper the sweetness of the flowers, into their conscience the peace of the rainbow, into their character the loveliness and fruitfulness of the summer. It ends with poetry, leaving its votaries poor and blind and miserable and naked.

JAMES MILL and his son, John Stuart Mill, cast additional light on our enquiry; they belonged mainly to the same school as Godwin, and their lives are similarly instructive. Commencing public life as a Christian minister, James Mill eventually repudiated the Christian faith as Godwin had also done, and for the greater part of his career was a pronounced and representative atheist. He was a severe critic of the Christian faith and morality. 'I have a hundred times heard my father say, that all nations and ages have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression, that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity.'¹ Anaxagoras affirmed that snow was really black, notwithstanding that it appeared white to our senses; James Mill made here a somewhat analogous but far more surprising discovery in convicting Christianity of being the *ne plus ultra* of wickedness, whilst generations of the best and wisest of men have regarded it admiringly as the supreme expression of goodness and righteousness. And it was chiefly on moral grounds that James Mill

¹ *Autobiography*, p. 40.

rejected Christianity. ‘My father’s rejection of all that is called religious belief, was not, as many might suppose, primarily a matter of logic and evidence: the grounds of it were moral, still more than intellectual. He found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness.’ He regarded religion ‘with the feelings due to a great moral evil.’ ‘He looked upon it as the greatest enemy of morality.’ Christianity ‘radically vitiated the standard of morals by making it consist in doing the will of a being whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful.’

It is distressing to pass from these superlative moralizings to the character of the moralist. There is no impeachment of his conduct *in* society at large, but the features of the man *in private life* are exceedingly repulsive. His son, John S. Mill, says, ‘His temper was constitutionally irritable,’ and of his never mastered unamiability there is indeed little doubt. Take Grote’s first impressions of Mill: ‘I have breakfasted and dined several times with Ricardo, who has been uncommonly civil and kind to me. I have met Mill often at his house, and hope to derive great pleasure and instruction from his acquaintance, as he is a very profound thinking man, and seems well disposed to communicate, as well as clear and intelligible in his manner. His mind has, indeed, all that cynicism and asperity which belong to the Benthamian school, and what I chiefly dislike *in* him is, the readiness and seeming preference with which he dwells on the *faults and defects* of others—even of the greatest men! But it is so very rarely that a man of any depth comes across

my path, that I shall most assuredly cultivate his acquaintance a good deal farther.'¹ Here the distinguished metaphysician stands revealed: vigorous intellect, cynical, censorious temper. Octave Feuillet says: 'A man of superior intellect has almost always, so far as my experience goes, faults of character equal to his ability and in proportion to his achievements.' This would certainly seem to be the case in those free-thinking circles with which the brilliant Frenchman is familiar.

Let Mr. Bain, however, who warmly appreciates James Mill as a thinker, finish the unlovely picture of his private character. 'In 1830, he had a family of nine: the eldest, twenty-four, the youngest, six. Their education up to this time had been conducted wholly in the house; partly by himself and, gradually more and more, by the elder ones teaching the younger. He never entirely ceased to take a part; either, in the early morning, in his dressing-room, or in the evening he heard their lessons in a summary fashion; treating their deficiencies with sternness and severity. The *Autobiography* expresses with sufficient frankness the defective side of Mill's demeanour to his children. Such a phrase as "the most impatient of men" speaks a volume, and we have only to turn the leaves to realize the particulars. He could exercise perfect self-control in his intercourse with the world, and his social and commanding qualities gained and kept friends, but at home he did not care to restrain the irritability of his temperament. In his advancing years, as often happens, he courted the affection of the younger children, but their love to him was never wholly unmixed with fear, for, even in his most amiable moods,

¹ *James Mill*, by Bain, p. 18

he was not to be trifled with. His entering the room where the family was assembled was observed by strangers to operate as an immediate damper. This was not the worst. The one really disagreeable trait in Mill's character, and the thing that has left the most painful memories, was the way that he allowed himself to speak and behave to his wife and children before visitors. When we read his letters to friends, we see him acting the family man with the utmost propriety, putting forward his wife and children into their due place; but he seemed unable to observe this part in daily intercourse.¹

If a man painted better than Raphael, sang more sublimely than Milton, persuaded more eloquently than Demosthenes, we could not forgive him such mean and detestable conduct. Here was a moralist loftily snuffing at the moral ideal of Christianity; a philosopher expounding the true laws of the universe; a politician contending earnestly for the largest liberty; a public teacher painting for the people noble pictures of domestic life; and yet a bitter cynic, a despot in his own circle, harsh to his excellent wife, cruel to his gifted children, his very entering the room spoiling the music of domestic felicity. It is the old story over again—a lofty ideal and a bitter failure; teaching mankind how to attain perfectibility, and personally floundering in the mud.

‘And by some mighty magic yet unknown,
Our actions guide, yet cannot guide their own.’

Would not Christianity have supplied the softer element so grievously lacking in James Mill? Anyhow that element was not supplied by scepticism; scepticism left Mill a cold,

¹ *James Mill*, p. 335.

acute thinker, with an odious character—one of the very last to secure the admiration and love of the human world.

JOHN S. MILL specially invites attention in an enquiry like the present—the effect of scepticism on character. If scepticism could fashion a grand character, it ought to have succeeded with John S. Mill; the famous philosopher had a fine nature, and his education was conducted from the beginning on severely sceptical principles. Yet all parties agree that his nature was distorted by the atheistic culture, and much of his afterlife was occupied in painful endeavours to recover the fulness and proportion of character sacrificed by his stern infidel father. His atheistic culture starved his soul; he was sent into the world with hardly a grain of poetry in his head, or a spark of love in his heart, and some of the saddest mistakes of his life are directly traceable to this false education.

James Mill, we have seen, repudiated Christianity on moral grounds; and the son had very little better opinion of that morality. John S. Mill writes: ‘The (Christian) ideal of excellence is wretchedly low. Believers shrink from an elevated standard of excellence, because they feel (even when they do not distinctly see) that such a standard would conflict with many of the dispensations of nature, and with much of what they are accustomed to consider as the Christian creed.’¹ So that John S. Mill proposed to himself ‘an elevated standard of excellence’ from which Christian ‘believers shrink.’

Let us consider the philosopher’s conduct, and see whether

¹ *Autobiography*, p. 42.

believers have not good reason to shrink from the elevated standard of excellence proposed by unbelief. Professor Bain, who certainly would do Mill no injustice, writes thus about the connection of the philosopher with Mrs. Taylor: 'I am bound to take notice of what Mill calls the greatest friendship of his life; his relation to Mrs. Taylor, which began in 1831, and led to his marrying her, twenty years later, when her first husband was dead. When I went to London in 1842, the friendship had lasted eleven years. It was the familiar talk of all the circle. . . . The connexion soon became known to his father, who taxed him with being in love with another man's wife. He replied, he had no other feeling towards her than he would have towards an equally able man. The answer was unsatisfactory, but final. His father could do no more, but he expressed to several of his friends his strong disapproval of the affair. Some attempts at remonstrance were made by others, but with no better result. Nothing, it was said, drew down his resentment more surely than any interference, or any remarks that came to his ear, on the subject. When I first knew him he was completely alienated from Mrs. Grote, while keeping up his intercourse with Grote himself; and as she was not the person to have an opinion without freely expressing it, I inferred that the estrangement had some reference to Mrs. Taylor. Mrs. Austin, too, I was told, came in for the cold shoulder; and Harriet Martineau, who had special opportunities of knowing the history of the connexion, and also spoke her mind freely concerning it, was understood to be still more decisively under the ban. The upshot was that every one of Mill's friends abstained from all allusions to Mrs. Taylor, and he

was equally reticent on his side. Her name was never mentioned in his own family. In the summer of 1842, and for some of the following summers, I cannot say how many, I knew that he went to dine with her at her husband's house in Kent Terrace, Regent's Park, about twice a week (Mr. Taylor himself dining out); there were certain days that he was not available for a walk with me from the India House to Kensington.

'The behaviour of her husband was, in the circumstances, exceedingly generous. After some remonstrances and explanations, he accepted the situation; a *modus vivendi*, as the phrase is, was agreed upon; and he was a consenting party to the intercourse that Mill describes. No doubt he and his children were sufferers by the diversion of his wife's thoughts and attentions, to what extent I will not presume to say. . . . It is a painful fact that his (Mill's) marriage was the occasion of his utter estrangement from his mother and sisters. He had been the joy and light of the house while he lived with the family. Some very slight incident was laid hold of as a ground of offence, and all communication was thenceforth broken off, excepting on essential matters of business. But for the redeeming circumstance of his coming forward, with his natural generosity, when misfortune arose, the relations with his own family after his marriage would have seriously shaded his biography. I speak, of course, from one-sided knowledge, which is never held conclusive; but all parties concerned have been under powerful motives to put the best possible construction upon his conduct.'¹

This whole business was deplorable enough, but the

¹ *John S. Mill: A Criticism.* By Professor Bain.

treatment of it by Mr. Mill himself in his *Autobiography* is a compound of intolerable cant and hypocrisy ; we see how self-willed men, skilful in the use of language, can justify to themselves most abominable doings, and how they fancy dust can be thrown in the eyes of spectators.

Speaking of Mrs. Taylor, he says : ‘ Married at an early age to a most upright, brave, and honourable man, of liberal opinions and good education, but without the intellectual or artistic tastes which would have made him a companion for her, though a steady and affectionate friend, for whom she had true esteem and the strongest affection through life, and whom she most deeply lamented when dead.’ Again, speaking of his few friends, we read : ‘ Among these the principal was the incomparable friend of whom I have already spoken. At this period she lived mostly with one young daughter, in a quiet part of the country, and only occasionally in town, with her first husband, Mr. Taylor. I visited her equally in both places, and was greatly indebted to the strength of character which enabled her to disregard the false interpretations liable to be put on the frequency of my visits to her while living generally apart from Mr. Taylor, and on our occasionally travelling together, though in all other respects our conduct during these years gave not the slightest ground for any other supposition than the true one, that our relation to each other at that time was one of strong affection and confidential intimacy only. For though we did not consider the ordinances of society binding on a subject so entirely personal, we did feel bound that our conduct should be such as in no degree to bring discredit on her husband, nor therefore on herself.’¹ Again, we are

¹ P. 230.

permitted to learn one of the most important events of his private life ‘was my marriage, in April, 1851, to the lady whose incomparable worth had made her friendship the greatest source to me both of happiness and of improvement during many years, in which we never expected to be in any closer relation to one another. Ardently as I should have aspired to this complete union of our lives at any time in the course of my existence at which it had been practicable, I, as much as my wife, would far rather have foregone that privilege for ever, than have owed it to the premature death of one for whom I had the sincerest respect, and she the strongest affection. That event, however, having taken place in July, 1849, it was granted to me to derive from that evil my own greatest good, by adding to the partnership of thought, feeling, and writing which had long existed, a partnership of our entire existence.’¹

Such is the morality permitted and justified by atheism. Not one word is alleged by any party against Mr. Taylor;—he appears to have been an intelligent, generous, estimable man. And yet Mr. J. S. Mill enters his house and comes between him and his wife in the manner described above! Mr. Taylor was wanting ‘in the intellectual and artistic tastes which would have made him a companion’ for his ‘incomparable’ wife, and so John S. Mill, despite the protests of the husband, the indignation of his father, the remonstrances of his friends, enters into the closest intimacy with her, visits her almost daily, is her companion in the absence of her husband, and together they visit the Continent. Of the affection the Platonic couple felt for Mr. Taylor, and

¹ P. 240.

the hot tears they shed upon his grave, we will not permit ourselves to speak.

More cruel, inexcusable conduct than that of the infidel philosopher it is impossible to conceive. Husband, wife, children — nothing was sacred that came in the way of his selfish pleasure. ‘We did not consider the ordinances of society binding on a subject so entirely personal.’ No; indeed, what ordinances of society does infidelity consider binding, if those ordinances come in the way of indulgence and aggrandizement? As to the subject of domestic relationships being ‘entirely personal,’ what then is social? what then is sacred? If the ordinances of society are not sacred and obligatory here, will they be considered binding in respect to liberty, property, life, or any subject whatever? Our generation is pretty well tired of John S. Mill, but his story strikingly reveals to an age infatuated with the promise of infidelity the compatibility of atheism with deeply immoral conduct, all that is necessary being that the sinner is a utilitarian philosopher, and the sin tastily covered with veils of sentiment and flowers of rhetoric. John S. Mill, unlike Mr. Arnold in certain intellectual items, was one with him in general infidelity, the philosopher acting on the favourite aphorism of the poet, and ‘giving the preference of flexibility of thinking above earnestness of doing. He made a stream of fresh thought play freely about our stock notions and habits;’ the result being disaster, bitterness, disgrace.

HARRIET MARTINEAU is another most interesting figure in the controversy between faith and unbelief. As is so well known, coming under the influence of Mr. Atkinson,

a mesmeric atheist, the distinguished lady rejected the Christian faith she had long enthusiastically held, and wrote and spoke with rapture of the moral efficacy of atheism. At the conclusion of the *Autobiography*, with which she happily furnished the world, this passage will be found: ‘My last days are cheered by the sense of how much better my later years have been than the earlier, or than, in the earlier, I ever could have anticipated. Some of the terrible faults of my character which religion failed to ameliorate, and others which superstition bred in me, have given way, more or less, since I attained a truer point of view; and the relief from old burdens, the uprising of new satisfactions, and the opening of new clearness,—the fresh air of nature, in short, after imprisonment in the ghost-peopled cavern of superstition,—has been as favourable to my moral nature as to intellectual progress and general enjoyment.’¹ Here is the story of another conversion out of Church, and we naturally look with eager curiosity for the signs of the extraordinary grace thus warmly and emphatically celebrated.

It is unnecessary to say the moral figure disclosed in this *Autobiography* is miserably disappointing. The conceit, arrogance, inflation, and censoriousness of the woman are egregious and exaggerated beyond parallel—it is one of the unloveliest female portraits ever traced. Curran said of some egotistical woman: ‘She is a pustule of vanity.’ In the *Autobiography of Miss Martineau* you seem to have found Curran’s original. Writing from America the lady says: ‘I have been touched (in spite of the absurdity) by a letter from an insane gentleman of Ohio (gone mad on

¹ Vol. ii., p. 438.

high subjects), appointing me high priestess of God and nature, if I dare undertake the charge.'¹ But later on, when the restraining, balancing, chastening influences of religion had been dispensed with, and egotism revelled in the licentiousness of atheism, the lady seems to have accepted in sober earnestness the vast commission of the mad gentleman, at least so far as the latter portion of the commission was concerned, and she confidently puts forth herself on all occasions as the high priestess of nature and humanity. She is evermore telling us how people disliked her trumpet; it was not the ear-trumpet people disliked so much, but the trumpet she blew so persistently and shamelessly. Vanity more blind, arrogance more despotic, pride more presumptuous and glaring, resentments more petty, censoriousness more undiscriminating and bitter than is found in this self-portraiture, it is impossible to imagine. This particular class of vices attains quite abnormal proportions, irresistibly reminding us of Milton's archangel fallen.

Mrs. Fenwick Miller, in the *Eminent Women Series*, renders an account of Miss Martineau, marked by much moderation and fairness; Mrs. Miller's sketch being a delightful contrast to the rhetorical hysteria of Mrs. Chapman. Let us note the estimate of the *Autobiography* given by Mrs. Miller, and the apology she presents for its pitiable contents. 'All things taken into account, it is no wonder that those who knew and loved her whole personality are shocked and amazed at the inadequate presentation given of it in those volumes.' 'No one who knew her considers that she did herself justice in the *Autobiography*. It is hard and censorious; it displays vanity, both in its depre-

¹ *Autobiography*, vol. iii., p. 123.

ciation of her own work, and in the recital of the petty slights and insults which had been offered to her from time to time; it is aggressive, as though replying to enemies rather than appealing to friends; and no one of either the finer or the softer qualities of her nature is at all adequately indicated. It is, in short, the least worthy of her true self of all the writings of her life.¹

The pleas Mrs. Miller thus puts in on behalf of her heroine we find ourselves utterly unable to accept. The bad qualities displayed in the *Autobiography* were, Mrs. Miller alleges, partially the result of the evangelical criticism to which Miss Martineau was subject on her lapse into atheism. This plea is decidedly worthless. If atheism is the mighty moral tonic it is represented to be, and if the vaunted 'fresh air of nature' is rich in soul-invigorating ozone, as we are assured it is by those who have escaped from the 'caverns of superstition,' the irritation, haughtiness, and bitterness of the new convert were totally inexcusable. Uplifted by the joyous expansive power of a new affection, Miss Martineau ought to have treated evangelical criticism with the sweetest of smiles. Then, again, Mrs. Miller explains Miss Martineau's aggressive, ungracious temper as the result of the novelty of her new position and faith. 'New ideas, like new clothes, sit uneasily, and are noticeable to their wearer.' But surely these ladies, mistresses in the art of dress, know enough about new clothes to know that if such clothes be only rich or beautiful, a little awkwardness more or less in the wearer will not much detract from the general admiration of attire so intrinsically lovely and precious. When 'new ideas' appear so repul-

¹ P. 175.

sive, as the ideas of atheism did in the spirit and speech of Miss Martineau, we have the best of reasons for believing in the inferiority of the ideas, and not in the awkwardness of a new convert displaying fine doctrines to disadvantage. Again, Mrs. Miller extenuates: ‘Readers of that interesting but misleading work (*the Autobiography*) must bear in mind that it was a very hasty production. The two large volumes were written in a few months.’ The haste with which the story was written is rather a guarantee for its candour and fidelity. It has been acutely remarked, ‘What a man is by a start, that he is really,’ and the swift, angry autobiography gives deepest, clearest insight into Miss Martineau’s heart of hearts. She was surprised into a self-revelation. ‘In short,’ says Mrs. Miller, ‘*the Autobiography* is the least worthy of her true self of all the writings of her life.’ That is, to speak faithfully, the authoress was herself so much less great and worthy than her writings—her character so much inferior to her intellect.

Miss Martineau is a companion failure with Carlyle. Immensely inferior in genius to the Scotchman, the lady possessed uncommon faculty and force, and, justly moulded, she would have ranked with the shining characters of history, neither wanting in strength nor sweetness; but as it was, the promising and abundant elements found in her constitution were miserably wasted and marred by the false idea and passion which, at a critical moment, took possession of her. Carlyle might speak pityingly, contemptuously, of ‘poor Harriet,’ and Harriet could discern clearly the defects of Carlyle, but both alike were grand characters spoiled in the making. They both went to pieces for want of a master: *the Master*. Men live by admiration, love, and hope, and

when the strongest, richest natures fail to find the Supreme Object for the imagination, conscience, and heart, the failure is all the more melancholy, as testified to by the biographies of Carlyle and Harriet Martineau. Christianity justly boasts of the female character that has arisen under its inspiring, guiding influence ; that character, in its mingled brightness and seriousness, intelligence and affection, vigour and refinement, modesty and helpfulness, reveals the best gifts and powers of human nature, raised to their highest, ripest fruition, and is the finest spectacle this earth has to show ; but it is a distinct, sheer descent to female character expressed in the coarseness of Mary Woolstonecraft, the wantonness of Miss Evans, the vanity and arrogance of Miss Martineau. One of the truest practical tests that could be applied to any faith or theory would be its effect on female character ; modern unbelief thus tested by modern biography, has the very least to recommend it.

It may be well, in concluding our view of life under infidel influence, to glance at the characters of the representatives of the three systems of unbelief which, at the present day, divide between them the sceptical world.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, the founder of modern Pessimism, is well worth far more consideration as a man than we can afford to give him here. Schopenhauer, it will be seen, had a just conception of the importance of character. 'Though wanting all intellectual advantages and culture, a noble character stands forth boldly, and is not deficient in anything. The greatest genius, on the other hand, will excite disapprobation if stained with moral defects. As

torches and fireworks pale before the sun, even so are intellect, genius, and beauty outshone and obscured by goodness of heart. Wherever it appears in a high degree, it more than compensates for the want of these qualities; nay, we are ashamed to feel that we miss them. The narrowest intellect, the most grotesque ugliness, if allied to this rare nobleness of soul, are transfigured, irradiated by beauty of a higher kind, wisdom speaks out of them that strikes all others dumb. Moral goodness is a transcendental quality, belongs to an order of things which reaches above this life, and is incommensurable with any other perfection. Where it is present in a high degree, it widens the heart until it embraces the world, and everything lies within and nothing without, because it identifies all being with its own. . . . What are wit and genius; what Bacon, when compared to this? ¹ What can be more truthful, beautiful, promising than this!

Schopenhauer's own life and character unhappily failed to realize the moral goodness so eloquently depicted. He affords another striking example of the moral impotence of atheism. His intellectual arrogance knew no bounds. 'Schopenhauer was penetrated with the conviction that he had been placed in a world peopled with beings morally and intellectually contemptible, from whom he must keep apart, . . . making it his duty to instruct and raise them from their debased condition.' It is easy to imagine what would be the outcome of such a self-ideal. Of course he treated all beings as if they were morally and intellectually contemptible. 'Easily angered, suspicious and irritable,' he was not only bad to live with, but impossible to live

¹ *Life of Schopenhauer*, by H. Zimmern, p. 82.

with. In 1807 Schopenhauer quitted Gotha, where he had been pursuing his studies, and proceeded to Weimar, where his mother was then residing. He did not, however, reside with his mother, at her express desire. ‘It is needful to my happiness,’ she wrote to him shortly before his arrival, ‘to know that you are happy, but not to be a witness of it. I have always told you it is difficult to live with you; and the better I get to know you the more I feel this difficulty increase, at least for me. I will not hide it from you: as long as you are what you are, I would rather bring any sacrifice than consent to live with you. I do not undervalue your good points, and that which repels me does not lie in your heart; it is in your outer not your inner being; in your ideas, your judgment, your habits; in a word, there is nothing concerning the outer world in which we agree. Your ill-humour, your complaints of things inevitable, your sullen looks, the extraordinary opinions you utter—like oracles, none may presume to contradict; all this depresses me and troubles me, without helping you. Your eternal quibbles, your laments over the stupid world and human misery, give me bad nights and unpleasant dreams.’¹ By and by the altercations between Schopenhauer and his mother became so violent, they could not dwell together in the same town. ‘In the spring they parted, with bitter feelings on either side. Schopenhauer has been much blamed for his want of filial piety to his mother; it is undeniable that he could not make sufficient allowance for idiosyncrasies foreign to himself, yet much can be said in his defence. “Love for a mother is the holiest thing on earth,” says one of the

admirers of his philosophy, who blames him in this respect.¹

It was not his mother only who proved Schopenhauer ill to live with. ‘In Berlin he lived in lodgings, and land-ladies plagued and robbed him, as they do minor mortals. He hated all disturbance, despised all gossip and needless chatter. With horror he discovered that an acquaintance of his landlady’s was in the habit of holding coffee parties —peculiarly German feminine institutions, sacred to small talk, backbiting, and all uncharitableness—in *his* ante-room, in the very precincts of the philosophic temple. In an excess of blind fury, he seized her roughly, and threw her out of the door. She fell on her right arm, and was severely injured, so that she declared herself incapable of earning her livelihood. The matter was brought into Court, and hotly contested by Schopenhauer on the score of infringement of his house rights. He lost his suit, and was condemned to maintain her for life. The old woman was blessed with a tough constitution, and exemplified the proverbial longevity of annuitants. Even the cholera grappled with her in vain; for over twenty years was Schopenhauer saddled with this burden.’²

These furious outbursts of temper were not the worst part of Schopenhauer’s character; his life was otherwise seriously in the wrong. ‘I preach sanctity,’ said the philosopher of despair, ‘but I am myself no saint.’ This appears to have been quite true. ‘Schopenhauer led no saintly ascetic life, nor did he pretend to this eminence. He despised women; . . . but he was not licentious. . . . He was only different to ordinary men in that he

¹ P. 57.

² P. 142.

spoke of what others suppress, and his over-zealous disciples, who saw the god-like in all his acts, even dragged these to the light of day, and have consequently drawn upon him an imputation he never deserved.' So ingeniously and delicately does Miss Zimmern veil the frailty of her hero. It is no part of our business to discuss the exact limits of Schopenhauer's sensual licence; it will be sufficiently understood from this extract how the philosopher who misinterpreted life abused it, how the superfine maligner of woman did his best to make her as despicable as he painted her. To say 'he spoke of what other men suppress,' is to say, he added shamelessness to sensuality. As Miss Zimmern candidly avows: 'He must throughout his life have been painfully conscious of the discordance of his philosophical principles with his habitual practice.'¹ Nothing is more strange than the contrast between Schopenhauer's austere, self-renouncing philosophy and his self-indulgent life, and it is difficult to think so great a soul never suffered, finding itself evermore involved in deep hopeless contradiction.

Speaking of her most instructive volume, Miss Zimmern writes: 'The portrait—should the execution have in any degree corresponded with the intention—will, we are convinced, be valued by all who prefer sterling humanity to affectation, who know how to esteem a genuine man. By many it will be deemed unattractive, by some perhaps even forbidding. We shall not be discouraged by cavils grounded upon the fallacy of estimating every man by a uniform conventional standard, without reference to the special mission appointed him in the world.' Here then we get

¹ P. 108.

back to that 'uniform conventional standard' which gives so much offence to the humanists; but entirely preferring sterling humanity to affectation, we refuse to do homage to Schopenhauer as to a genuine man. Guilty of pride of intellect and boundless presumption, vain in the worst sense of the word, ungovernable in temper, suspicious, irritable, and addicted to practical licence of which he was not ashamed, the pessimist philosopher is not a pattern. 'All this of course seems extremely petty and contemptible, unworthy a philosopher,' says Miss Zimmern. 'Alas! man is at best "all with speckles pied." ' This is at once ingenious and kind, but considering Schopenhauer's generic prevailing vices, we cannot consent to consider him a fair character spotted with black: only a dark, repulsive character, relieved by a few lighter speckles.

AUGUSTE COMTE, the founder of the Positivist religion, furnishes another instance of painful failure of character.

The character and life story of Auguste Comte are disappointing and painful. Insubordinate as a youth, he was imperious and intolerable as a man. A few extracts from Principal Tulloch may suffice to exhibit the main characteristics of the famous atheistic leader.

'In the end of 1814 he began his studies at the École Polytechnique, and there he maintained his reputation for capacity, although he did not stand so high at the end of his first year as might have been expected from the promise of his initial examination. This was in some degree owing to the growth of his habits of insubordination, which were destined ere long to bring him into serious difficulty. In the course of his second session, one of the masters had

offended the junior students by his manner; the older pupils sympathized with their companions, and together they decided that the master was unworthy to continue in his office. They drew out a document to this effect, and sent it to the offender. Comte was its author, and his name stood first in the list of signatures attached to it. The result was that the school was disbanded, and our young philosopher's career suddenly arrested. He returned to Montpellier for a brief period; but the restraints of a home life had no charm for him. Before the end of 1816 he was again in Paris. He was left without resources; his parents, displeased with his independent course of action, refused to assist him; and he chose the function of teaching mathematics.¹

This arrogance and intractability manifested so early and emphatically grew with the years, the irritability and tyranny of Comte in later life being quite abnormal. He formed acquaintance with leading philosophers and statesmen, but his ambitious, overpowering personality prevented any enduring friendship or association; he exacted from the admirers of his genius a submission and subservience that able and independent men found themselves unable to pay. His enormous vanity and self-will led him in turn to quarrel with his parents, his masters, his colleagues, his admirers, his disciples. We are assured that atheism will gently touch the trembling strings, and secure among unbelieving man a harmony of love utterly unattainable by cantankerous theologians; but the friendships of infidelity are not the friendships of David and Jonathan. In perusing the story of the association of James Mill and Bentham,

¹ *Modern Theories in Philosophy and Religion*, p. 11.

of Miss Martineau and Carlyle, and again of Comte with Saint-Simon, John S. Mill and others of similar spirit, we are reminded again and again of the African proverb: 'Two crocodiles cannot live in the same hole.' It is surely a bitter irony that the prophet of altruism should have been the chief of egotists; that the founder of a pretentious sociology should have been in his own life pre-eminently anti-social; that the champion of the solidarity of the race should have proved unable to live with any one of its members. We see in Comte what we have seen again and again, that when reverence for God is lost, certain natures fall victims to a wild, boundless vanity, which renders them utterly impracticable in society, and we are reminded of a balloon swelling and rent escaping from the pressure of the atmosphere.

'In the year 1825 Comte married. The union proved an unhappy one. Husband and wife quarrelled frequently and violently, and at length, although not till after many years, formally separated. The result is not unintelligible on what appears the obvious view of M. Comte's character. His natural imperiousness, and that lack of good sense which so often spoils great gifts, must have rendered him a trying husband to any woman; and the chances were against the happiness and permanence of any alliance he might form. His disciples differ greatly as to the causes of quarrel. . . . It is unnecessary for us, happily, to adjudicate in such a business; but in fairness to Madame Comte we must say, that if her views were worldly, and therefore "exasperating" to her husband, she appears to have possessed many excellent qualities of sense and management. She evidently sought to moderate his more

violent enthusiasms and antipathies, and to bring him down to the world of everyday life, which he was so apt to forget. Nor was she deficient in tenderness, as we shall see immediately, and as he himself admits. Her moral conduct was unimpeachable, and her interest in his reputation continued watchful and earnest.'

'Two years after his separation from his wife, he made the acquaintance of a lady named Madame Clotilde de Vaux. As he was separated from his wife, so she was separated from her husband. He had been condemned to the galleys for life. Brought together in such singular circumstances on both sides, a "pure and passionate friendship" sprang up between them. On Comte's part, at least, the attachment appears to have been of the most tender and devoted character. He speaks of her in one of his letters as having inspired him with a happiness of which he had always dreamed, but which he had never hitherto experienced.'¹

'Every one who knew him,' says Mr. Lewes, 'during this brief period of happiness, will recall the mystic enthusiasm with which he spoke of her, and the irrepressible overflowing of his emotion which led him to speak of her at all times and to all listeners. It was in the early days of this attachment that I first saw him, and in the course of our very first interview he spoke of her with an expansiveness which greatly interested me. When I next saw him, he was as expansive in his grief at her irreparable loss; and the tears rolled down his cheeks as he detailed her many perfections. His happiness had lasted but one year. Her death made no change in his devotion. She

¹ Principal Tulloch.

underwent a transfiguration. Her subjective immortality became a real presence to his mystical affection. During life she had been a benign influence irradiating his moral nature, and for the first time giving satisfaction to the immense tenderness which slumbered there; she thus initiated him into the secrets of emotional life which were indispensable to his philosophy in its subsequent elaboration. Her death rather intensified than altered this influence, by purifying it from all personal and objective elements.

'The remainder of his life was a perpetual hymn to her memory. Every week he visited her tomb. Every day he prayed to her and invoked her continual assistance. His published invocations and eulogies may call forth mockeries from frivolous contemporaries—intense emotions and disinterested passions easily lending themselves to ridicule—but posterity will read in them a grave lesson, and will see that this modern Beatrice played a considerable part in the evolution of the religion of humanity.'

So gracefully can Mr. Lewes defend mad extravagancy if it only be exhibited on the side of atheism and licence. Dispassionate readers will see in the devotion of John S. Mill to Mrs. Taylor, of Auguste Comte to Clotilde de Vaux, and in the insane worship the two philosophers paid to two ordinary women, that the deep religious nature of man cannot be outraged with impunity, for, being cheated of the true object of love and worship, it takes a swift revenge and bows us down in irrational, degrading adoration of very ordinary mortals.

Making every allowance for Comte on the ground of his cerebral malady, it must be felt that his character was

profoundly defective, his life full of distortion, and his whole course lamentable in the extreme. The vaster a man's genius the more he needs the discipline of faith, and to compare Newton with Comte is to show the immense superiority of a great life disciplined by Christianity.

The French Revolutionary School, of which VOLTAIRE is the special representative, would not be noticed by us here except for the fact that efforts are continually being made to paint the great figures of that school in flattering colours, and to recommend their philosophy to the acceptance of our generation. Mr. John Morley has taken special pains to familiarize English readers with these heroes of the French Revolution, and with an affectation of impartiality to set forth their evil aspects as well as their excellences, but none can mistake that the general aim of Mr. Morley's essays is to raise the French atheistic leaders in the popular estimate, and to recognise in their writings the grand notes of truth and liberty.

That the French Revolution was a revolt against despotism is clear, and as such it demands our admiration; but it was as much a revolt against morals as it was against despotism. Of Voltaire, Edmond Scherer says: 'He was in sum - total a pitiable character, devoid of every sentiment of personal dignity, the most impudent of liars, the most obsequious of courtiers, and as great a stranger to patriotism as to decency.' Mr. Morley acknowledges that Voltaire wrote 'one of the most unseemly poems that exist in any tongue;' and certainly Rousseau wrote the most unseemly autobiography. The great leaders of that famous movement were nearly all gross, sensual men,

who instigated the licence of the times in which they lived.

It was the wild immorality which Voltaire and his compeers regarded with complacency that brought to nought their protest against tyranny; and whatever services these infidel politicians incidentally rendered to France and to humanity, have been more than effaced by the profound mischief wrought throughout the whole world by the flagrant debasement of morals which characterized the famous movement. No political or literary service whatever will compensate for injury to the moral sense of the race; it is always and everywhere a deeper calamity to exchange political slavery for moral licence. We do not see very clearly the advantage in Mr. Morley sending his generation to study sympathetically the literature and lights of the French Revolution. In the mummy pits of the East poor wretches dig amidst dust and darkness to discover, if possible, jewels which may have been buried long ago with the dead,—it is not, we believe, a very safe or profitable avocation, as it is certainly not a very pleasant one; and we think the generality of readers will be more likely to return from the study of the filthy literature of the French Revolution with a plague spot in their heart than with any adequate literary, political, or philosophical treasure.

It is a disagreeable task to set forth the faults and failings of the several great characters adduced by us; and we feel it almost necessary to apologize to the reader for dwelling at such length on the sickening details, but it was unavoidable. It has been boldly declared that atheism creates a new and superior type of saints, and it was

necessary whatever sacrifice of feeling the investigation might involve to know the fact. The parties just reviewed by us are representative men and women; they are regarded with something like idolatry by infidel schools; their talents are beyond question, their literary monuments superb; but their personal character stands in painfullest contrast with their intellectual reputation, and fully confirms our misgivings concerning the moral influence of unbelief. They use the language of religion, they assume to transcend the traditional creed of Christendom, and so long as you refrain from judging their life all is eminently satisfactory; but with that judging admiration is seriously qualified. ‘Read Gibbon. Selfish, vain, unhappy man! . . . He was a good specimen of the human being as to its alternate power and weakness,—enjoyment from its involuntary excellences and suffering from its lowest tendencies.’¹ Quite true; true of Miss Martineau herself; true of them all—they exhibit the alternate power and weakness of the human being, enjoyment from its *involuntary excellences* and suffering from its lowest tendencies.

Many freely declare they do not believe in conversion, they conceive it a suspicious doctrine confined to the theological sphere; it is, therefore, exceedingly interesting to find purely rational men believing in some such change. Goethe believed in conversion. The great poet was at one time intimate with evangelical circles, and well understood and often borrowed their special phraseology. ‘Until you die to self you do not really live,’ was Goethe’s favourite maxim, and is it not the confession of conversion? In many a page does he remind you that he himself has

¹ Miss Martineau, *Autobiography*, vol. iii., p. 191.

suffered this marvellous change into something rich and strange.

Carlyle was converted, converted chiefly through the instrumentality of Goethe—the man whose presence was a Gospel of Gospels. ‘This year (1825) I found that I had conquered all my scepticisms, agonizing doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering mud-gods of my epoch; had escaped as from a worse than Tartarus, with all its Phlegethons and Stygian quagmires, and was emerging free in spirit into the eternal blue of ether, where, blessed be heaven! I have for the spiritual part ever since lived. . . . What my pious joy and gratitude then was, let the pious soul figure. In a fine and veritable sense, I, poor, obscure, without outlook, almost without worldly hope, had become independent of the world. What was death itself, from the world, to what I had come through? I understood well what the old Christian people meant by *conversion*, by God’s infinite mercy to them. I had, in effect, gained an immense victory, and for a number of years had, in spite of nerves and chagrins, a constant inward happiness, that was quite royal and supreme, in which all temporal evil was transient and insignificant, and which essentially remains with me still, though far oftener *eclipsed* and lying deeper *down* than then. Once more, thank heaven for its highest gift.’¹ This is truly a remarkable story of conversion out of Church, of a thinker seeing deeply into spiritual truths and feeling more or less their force; it is a philosophical rendering of Christian struggling out of the Slough of Despond.

¹ *Reminiscences*, vol. i., p. 288.

Mr. John S. Mill also underwent the mystic change. In 1826 he tells us how he fell into a state of deep despondency. ‘I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to; unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasurable excitement; one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times, becomes insipid or indifferent; the state, I should think, in which converts to Methodism usually are, when smitten by their first “conviction of sin.”’¹ Ultimately the metaphysician found in Wordsworth a medicine for his troubled soul, he felt himself ‘better and happier,’ and rising from the penitent bench commenced life with fresh interest and hope. Miss Martineau’s account of her adoption of atheism is the story of a conversion, and is told in the glowing language of one who has suddenly passed into liberty and light. George Eliot proudly assures us that with her atheism commenced a new deeper life. And in an ambiguous passage Mr. M. Arnold tells he has suffered ‘a conversion,’ but as he is mercifully spared we will not enquire more curiously into this interesting event. ‘Marvel not,’ said the Master, ‘that I said unto you, Ye must be born again.’ ‘Marvel not’; regeneration is a doctrine in the rational world as well as the ecclesiastical—there also they acknowledge awakenings of the soul to new ideas, sympathies, and aims.

Yet whilst it is satisfactory to observe a certain correspondence between conversions within the Church and without it, the latter are far from giving entire satisfaction—they fail to produce the elevation of character and purity of conduct that we have right to expect, the new heart not revealing itself in newness of life. Goethe did

¹ *Autobiography*, p. 132.

not desist from self-indulgence ; Carlyle went on with his tyranny and cursing ; Miss Martineau's swelling vanity continued to swell ; John S. Mill did not let alone another man's wife ; George Eliot did not let alone another woman's husband. These conversions are not fruitful in character, not attested by life.

What is the test of conversion in the Church of God ? 'He that believes in Christ,' says Wesley, 'discerns spiritual things : he is enabled to taste, see, hear, and feel God.' Commenting on this passage from Wesley, Mr. M. Arnold observes : 'There is nothing practical and solid here. A company of Cornish revivalists will have no difficulty in tasting, seeing, hearing, and feeling God, twenty times over, to-night, and yet may be none the better for it to-morrow morning.'¹ Here is the grand point—*they are better for it.* Conversions out of Church are facts, deeply interesting facts, miserably failing nevertheless in depth and efficacy tested by actual life ; but the Cornish miners are indisputably the better, immensely the better for the work of grace upon their exulting hearts—they bring forth noble fruits of temperance, kindness, purity, charity, they prove themselves new men by living new lives. 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'²

¹ *St. Paul and Protestantism.*

² 1 Cor. vi, 9-11.

What more inspiring than a walk through the portrait gallery of the Church of God? How vast it is! No narrow cabinet slowly and painfully stored, but stately halls overflow with glowing gems. If the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews felt time would fail to enumerate the great characters of Jewish sacred story, how much rather will time fail to afford even a glance at the bright shadows of glorious men and women lingering in the literature of the Christian Church! All kinds of temperament are here—serious, vivacious, bold, timid, contemplative, active, serene, eager; all types and measures of intellect; all vocations of life—merchants, soldiers, artists, husbandmen, shipmasters, hewers of wood and drawers of water; all ranks—kings, nobles, priests, peasants; in richest variety they shine down upon us from the expansive walls, and whether we pause at slight sketch or finished picture, at solitary portrait, holy family, or historical cartoon crowded with figures, we are impressed or charmed, for whatever the imperfection and defects in this chamber of imagery, the colours are really the colours of Heaven, the artist Divine. We are not wishful to deny or condone the faults of Christians, but when all has been said on this score that can be said, the fact remains that the Christian Church has produced the very highest types of moral grace and majesty, and this not rarely but with a constancy and inexhausted plenitude which proves it to possess the fulness of eternal life and beauty. The biographical treasures of the Church of Christ, it will also be remembered, are but a fragment of a vast universe of moral worth which has been silently merged into the realm of immortal perfection, leaving no reminiscence of itself here. Bad men have

darkened the Church ever since Judas betrayed his Lord, and many more without being criminal have displayed melancholy infirmities of character; but such is the moral sense of Christianity that Judas is hanged and imperfect lives are sorrowfully veiled, whilst scepticism glories in its shame, making its apostles, prophets, and heroes out of moral apostates of most glaring type. ‘The criterion of water is the water-lily,’ says the Hindoo; so the flowering of noble character is the criterion of the depth and purity of the intellectual and moral elements by which our human life is nourished. Thus tested, infidelity is declared a shallow unwholesome pool, whilst the faith of Christ, adorned by whitest lives, proves itself a river of life, pure as crystal, flowing from the throne of God.

Rousseau having lost a friend consoles himself with thoughts of another world in which he would be reunited to the lost one and find the dawn of a new felicity. Whereupon Mr. John Morley observes: ‘To pluck so gracious a flower of hope on the edge of the sombre echoless gulf of nothingness into which our friend has slid silently down, is a natural impulse of the sensitive soul, numbing remorse and giving a moment’s relief to the hunger and thirst of a tenderness that has been robbed of its object; yet would not men be more likely to have deeper love for those about them, and a keener dread of filling a house with aching hearts, if they courageously realized from the beginning of their days that we have none of this perfect companionable bliss to promise ourselves in other worlds, that the black and horrible grave is indeed the end of our communion, and that we know one another no more?’ A full recognition of death as annihilation is

to prove propitious to friendship and all the sweet domestic virtues. Men under thoroughly sceptical convictions ‘would be more likely to have deeper love for those about them, and a keener dread of filling a house with aching hearts’; realizing that no heavenly house awaits them, they will sedulously cultivate domestic unity, love, sweetness, purity, joy, surpassing anything found in circles deluded by the hope of immortality.

But where is there ghost of evidence to support this expectation ? Must we go to the Goethe household, with its half-marriage and confusions ? To Chelsea, and contemplate husband and wife in their terrible, bitter, life-long conflict, the house like a ‘mad-house,’ the wretched couple now and again separating for a while when the wrath and rage became intolerable ? Is the ideal to be found in the unblessed union of George Lewes and Marian Evans ? Or does Mr. Morley intend us to see the demonstration of the domestic gain of unbelief in the circle of Godwin ? Did Godwin hint the softening influence of atheism on character and friendship ? Is there anything specially delicious in his perpetual quarrels with his friends, in the conduct of Mary Woolstonecraft, either before or after her marriage with the ‘passionless philosopher,’ in the second marriage of Godwin with Mrs. Clairmont, in the abandonment by Shelley of his wife, and the seduction by him of Mary Godwin, in the suicides and miserable endings which shut the scene ? Are we to turn from the ‘greasy domesticity’ of the average Christian home to find the genuine article in the magic circle of James Mill, where the husband treated the wife with meanest tyranny, where the entrance of the father spoiled the music of the children ? Is the fine

fancy of a sacred, harmonious family reached when John S. Mill's baneful presence troubled the house of Mr. Taylor, who was even according to Carlyle 'the pink of hospitality'? Was Miss Martineau's treatment of her noble brother marked by extraordinary catholicity or tenderness? Or, can Mr. Morley intend us to find the green pastures and still waters of domestic life in the household of Comte? Or, in despair, must we penetrate the domestic shrine of Schopenhauer? None of these lights of unbelief can be presented as patterns; without exception they are warnings. And yet Mr. Morley would fain persuade us that hitherto cruel thorns will produce tender grapes and fragrant wine; that piercing thistles will surprise with luscious figs. Christian households are subject to melancholy misfortunes, schisms, and sorrows; but when the worst there comes to the worst, it is yet far better than the domestic scenes of infidel life painted by infidel hands; and with the terrible tyrannies, heartburnings, estrangements, cruelties of these representative unbelievers before us, the inducement is not strong to forsake the vine and fig-tree of Christian domesticity for some trees of paradise which Mr. Morley expects to bloom in the atheistic wilderness.

Are there not many disturbing signs in Christendom at the present day respecting that righteousness by which nations are established? Can we contemplate the state of things in France and Germany with equanimity?

In an article in the *Fortnightly Review* on the Statistics of Morality, Dr. Hayman says:—'If a map of Europe were before us shaded in proportion to the returns of known vice and crime, the darkest shadow would seem to rest exactly where the boast of intellectual light is

greatest—in Saxony, the very shrine of modern culture, the fortress of “free-thought.” In all Germany there are about 1 per cent. of marriages dissolved; but in Saxony the rate rises to 2·58 per cent. As a proper pendant to divorce, take illegitimacy. This is set down for all Europe at 7 per cent. of the total births, but Saxony claimed in 1878–79 about 13 per cent. Most portentous of all is the bad pre-eminence of Saxony in suicide. Criminals punished by law increased in the same country as follows:—

1871.	1872.	1873.	1874.	1875.	1876.	1877.
11,001	12,766	13,089	15,144	16,318	19,012	21,319

or nearly cent. per cent. in seven years, while the population's growth was 7 per cent. only. Of these, the cases of assault and murder rose in the same years by 556 per cent., and those of rapes upon children—most wanton foulness of all—by 918 per cent. in seven years; while criminals under eighteen increased by 430 per cent., and child criminals by 100 per cent. . . . Here and there another district of Germany is found to surpass Saxony in some one detail of its moral hideousness, e.g. in the Duchy of Mecklenburg one-third of the total of births were illegitimate in 1868; and Bavaria was more lately ahead of Saxony in this race of turpitude. But taken all round, this garden of the Muses radiates moral pestilence at a rate which ancient Rome and ancient Corinth at their worst could hardly surpass. For an example of the laurel trailed in the common sewer, commend us to cultured Saxony. It may probably challenge at heavy odds any spot of equal area and population in the whole world, civilized and savage, for proficiency in the collective depravity evinced

by divorce, illegitimacy, suicide, general crime, murderous assault, child-rape, and child criminality.'

'We have spoken of divorce in Germany as a whole, and in Saxony in particular. Its increase for three years in Prussia was nearly 20 per cent., or about four or five times that of the population. But the special *nidus* of this social bane is Switzerland for the Old World and Massachusetts for the New, in each of which it touches or approaches 5 per cent. of the total of marriages. The divorce of France grew in eleven years (1866-77) by nearly 15 per cent., with a population almost stationary. . . . It is the infidel theory of society eating its way into the home circle. The "weaker vessel" first shows the flaw. Womanhood finds a tainted atmosphere, and withers down to animality. More damning fact yet—the maximum rate of divorce follows that of education (so-called) and æsthetic refinement. In the city of Berlin divorce more than doubled for both sexes in the thirteen years 1867-80, and finds its most potent stimulus in art and literature. These refined professions furnish 2 per cent. of the marriage rate and 3 per cent. of the divorce rate. In France the tendency is yet more pronounced, where such "superior persons" marry as 2·4 per cent., and divorce as 23! Is it not evident that if such formed the bulk of the population, instead of a mere sprinkling, the social bond would be broken, the repulsive would overcome the attractive forces, and nothing could keep the system from flying to pieces! Again, leaving divorce for the present aside, 2 per cent. of the French population are "highly educated," but nearly 5 per cent. of the criminals are so. In Germany the liberal professions score from 2 to 3 per cent. of the gross census of employ-

ments, yet among their votaries crime went in ten years (1866–75) from 2·9 to 4·7 per cent. of the total of criminals. In Russia 10 per cent. of the people, but 25 per cent. of the criminals, can read. As in the concrete results of art which fill the public eye on the stage and in the *Pinakothek*, France leads and Germany follows in a headlong licence of carnal sensuousness, and the theatre is fed with carrion plots of criminal intrigue.'

'In Germany crime used to find a deterrent in home-life, and married criminals were a minority of the whole number. They are so perhaps still, but are increasing their proportion, especially in the great cities. There can hardly be a more formidable index of tendencies than this. It looks as if the swollen current of evil were loosening and shaking the foundations of society. As regards the classification of crime, offences against property in the eight old provinces of Prussia increased from 1871–77 by nearly 50 per cent.; but those which imply education on the part of the offenders grew disproportionately. Thus, falsified accounts showed cent. per cent., fraudulent bankruptcy nearly 150 per cent., official frauds over 350 per cent. of increase. Assaults with personal violence outgrew all, save the last of these, showing 200 per cent.; of these, licentious assaults showed cent. per cent., and, as compared with 1868, 121 per cent. The graver cases of such assaults, with which alone the higher courts deal, show up to 1878 the frightful increase of 300 per cent. In Bavaria, for seven years ending 1879, impure violence increased by 237 per cent.; and in Würtemberg by 218 per cent.; while in England the increase for twenty-four years was 67, and in France 63 per cent. only. In the eight Prussian provinces for

1871-77, duelling rose from three to thirty-five cases. Perjury, within the same limits of time and place, was more than doubled; breaches of public order grew by nearly 75 per cent., and counterfeited identity by nearly 250 per cent.'

'Infidel theories regarding man and nature, rising into barren and naked materialism, have acted with a solvent and mordant power upon Franco-German society, and we have here the results. It is interesting, especially in respect of suicide, but also of crime generally, in Germany, to compare the spread of the philosophy of despair—Pessimism. Precisely during the years which our table of suicide as above given covers, Von Hartmann, as the popular exponent of Schopenhauer, was rising to the zenith of favour with the German public. Between 1870 and 1878 his best-known work went through eight editions. It formulates the theory of which suicide in cold blood is the practical outcome—a veritable "Gospel according to Judas," preaching the noose and the precipice. The renegade of all human hope—of that which "springs eternal in the human breast"—Schopenhauer found the way prepared for him by the socialist, materialist, and secularist agencies, which had honeycombed the German mind for a generation previous; and lastly, Von Hartmann found a yet more potent stimulus in the demoralizing results of the Franco-German war. Precisely where intellectual appetite is keenest, in the country where you might pave the roads with the books and pamphlets published there, the philosophy of life-turned-sour has raised suicide, as was said a while ago of murder, to the sphere of the fine arts. More atrocious in its renunciation

of humanity than the Epicureanism which said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," this philosophy says, "Let us growl and snarl at our position in life, and die to-day," and, like—

"Sad Sir Balaam, curses God and dies."

The growing scepticism of past years begins to tell amongst ourselves, and if the Church of God should prove faithless, ruin to everything held precious to-day is not far off. We have shown how much of our literature trifles with morality; that our artists too and poets are in revolt against what is called Puritanism and prudishness, but what is really piety and purity. The morbid psychological writers of France have recently acquired an extraordinary popularity in this country. Revelations in our courts show how we are menaced by lusts and vices which destroyed the nations of old. And there is in the general mind a looseness of moral idea, a lack of reverence and subordination to authority, an impatience of restraint, an audacity and recklessness quite alarming. And if religious faith should continue to decline, this degeneration of life must gain acceleration.

1. There will be an abatement in the inherited moral force and bias of the nation. Our nation is saturated by the Christian spirit. Age after age the national mind has been familiarized with religious truth; the national conscience corrected by religious standards; the national life, in a thousand subtle ways, subjected to religious discipline. All must acknowledge how deeply the soul of the people has been modified by this long continuance of Christian ideals and associations. When men remonstrate, See, we are sceptical and yet display esteemed virtues, things con-

tinue much as they were ! we reply, Yes, inherited instincts and predispositions, ways of looking at things, modes of thought and action, are more or less persistent, and will not wholly cease in a generation. Careful experiments have shown that there is a deviation of the compass on board iron ships, which is due solely to the position occupied by the vessel while it was lying on the building slip, where it acquires a definite magnetic character, the needle invariably turning to that part of the ship which was farthest from the North while she was in process of construction. Our nation has acquired a definite moral character through the very peculiarity of its building—its conscience being determined by the prevalence of great Christian ideas through the ages in which its language, its laws, its institutions, its habits were being formulated. But if our primitive ideals are repudiated, our old doctrines denied, the very atmosphere changed, the nation will find its definite moral character more and more modified, until, in the end, it is lost altogether. Some look forward with pleasure to such a consequence, and think the vessel all the safer, the moral bias gone, but to such as believe our glorious ship of State was built true to the great, everlasting points, the loss of its definite, religious moral character can only be regarded as the precursor of bewilderment and shipwreck.

2. Another cause of acceleration in the decline of morality would be found in the cessation of competitive conditions. With the Christian Church in our midst the sceptical world is compelled to comparative circumspection ; it is aware it cannot always impose upon men by fine reasonings and promises, they will sometimes institute comparisons between

the actual character and action of the rival systems. The Greek painter said of his rival's picture: 'Not being able to make it beautiful, he has made it rich.' Scepticism, conscious of its real poverty, resorts to many affectations of superior excellence, that it may hold its own in competition with the confessedly noble creations of Christianity. But what if that competition should cease by the eclipse of Christ's Church? Infidelity does poorly now, as we have seen, but what would be the condition of things if the Church of Christ with its large views and lofty standards should vanish, and the system of infidelity be left unchecked in its self-will and passion?

3. The sceptical leaders of thought will naturally become more radical and extreme. Never in the past have such equivocal characters appeared on the stage as our new ethical teachers. They are peculiar to our generation. In the past, numbers of ardent unbelievers have contended vehemently with Christian teachers, equally pronounced and enthusiastic; but Darwin, Spencer, Justice Stephen, Matthew Arnold, and their compeers, are not exactly one thing or the other—in them is a strange commingling of faith and infidelity, of the language of religion with the principles of atheism, of admiration of the Scriptures with rejection of their cardinal contents. These men of less light and much leading are, for the most part, children of Christian people, they were nurtured in the faith of Christ, and it is not possible for them to strip themselves altogether of the ideas, feelings, and convictions of former days. But what will be the case with their children? Godwin and Mary Woolstonecraft advocated loose theories of marriage, but their children acted out these theories so uncompro-

misingly as to excite Godwin's deep anger ; James Mill, although himself living an irreproachable life on this score, taught dangerous marital doctrine, but very bitter was his resentment when his son John entered into equivocal relations with Mrs. Taylor. Thus the rising generation of sceptics may be expected, with logical consistency, to carry out their father's creed, and to proceed to lengths of licence never contemplated by the timidity of the unbelieving theorists of to-day. Du Chaillu tells us that at sunset some African tribes retire within doors ; they believe at the sunset hour certain mischievous spirits walk abroad. Spencer, Arnold, Greg, and such like, are strange disturbing shapes of the sunset, they ominously haunt the twilight, but when the great orb of our glory has gone down, these will give place to other spirits, spirits of the night, who will shout what our sceptics whisper, and glory in abominable doctrines and doings which these shapes of the sunset disown with horror.

4. There will be a corresponding increasing freedom and boldness in the actual life of sceptics generally.

‘A down-hill reformation rolls apace.’

Do we not see already the contempt of educated men for the judgment and censures of the public ? Men of independence of character, endowed with strength and pride of mind, already defy the censures of the people. What, said John S. Mill, have people to do with me cohabiting with another man's wife ? What, said George Eliot and George Lewes, do we care for a vulgar public flattening its nose against our window-pane ? And this self-assertion is extending to other spheres. Men, rejecting old restraints, gather boldness in respect to free ideas about property. If the commandment, ‘Thou shalt

not commit adultery,' be dispensed with, why not also, 'Thou shalt not steal'? If it is a matter altogether personal and lawful to take your neighbour's wife, what is to hinder taking his ass? And is not this licence seeking to violate the sacredness of life itself? Carlyle admired suicide, Miss Martineau sympathized with the doctrine of 'Euthanasia,' many modern pagans do the same, and if suicide is sometimes admirable, murder cannot always be so abominable. 'If these things are done in a green tree, what will be done in a dry?' Cultured men laugh at public opinion to-day, when it stands in the way of their personal pride or indulgence, dull conventional morality is a jest, they will continue to laugh more defiantly until there is no morality left to laugh at—after which there will be little room for laughter.

5. And it is necessary to anticipate the state of things when the atheistic doctrines, now chiefly confined to upper classes, shall have become fashionable with the masses of the people. These doctrines will not be confined to princes and philosophers; soon the people will scent the carcase. It has been observed that, whilst truths of the heart and conscience rise from the many to the few, all ideas of the mere understanding gravitate from the few to the many; and we may rest assured these loose ideas of the few, so congenial to our weak nature, will soon reach and find welcome with the multitude. What then? We have seen the deleterious effect of scepticism in those upper circles where education imposes restraints, where temptations are less severe, and social opinion most influential. But to what excess of riot will the poorer classes go without intellectual dissuasions, where temptation assails in its bitterest

forms, and public opinion is least felt of all? When might is right, caprice law, when sophistry has justified in philosophy the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, when the common people have drunk in the spirit of their sceptical monitors, and cast from them religious ideals and circumscriptions, it will be the Roman Empire back again with its terrific wickedness and misery, the Renaissance back again with its incest, parricide, and poisonings, the French Revolution back again with its infernal rage, its streaming blood.

Some fool the other day attempted Niagara in a patent cask. Although in the whirlpool beneath are wrecks of mighty empires and the raging waters are red with blood of ruined nations, yet our infidel philosophers have evermore some new, patent tub in which we are to shoot safely the terrible Niagara of unbelief. If wise, we shall not try the experiment, seeing we have nothing to gain and everything to lose. It is a grand thing to know when we are well off. Let us be loyal to the highest truth, the knowledge of God in Christ, lest we share the doom of those unhappy nations who knew not the time of their visitation.

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